



VEER DURGADAS RATHORE  
( AN EPIC )

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# VEER DURGADAS RATHORE : AN EPIC

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## Introduction

The history of the former state of Jodhpur (Maroo or Marwar) occupies a unique position in the annals of medieval India. It is replete with the deeds of bravery, selfless sacrifice and dauntless courage. Its rulers were either the strong allies of the Imperial Mughal power, or its dreaded foes. So great was the impact of Jodhpur on the fortunes of the Mughal throne, that every Mughal Emperor had always tried to win its rulers to their side. Its power and influence considerably declined with the fall of the Mughal Empire. The later part of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth century was full of woeful tales for Jodhpur. The Marathas and Pindaris started their loot, pillage and atrocities unabatingly. The state of Jodhpur, therefore, entered into a treaty relationship with the East India Company in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The British influence was consolidated by the Government of India Act of A.D. 1858, when Jodhpur came under the paramountcy of the British Crown. The paramountcy lapsed in A.D. 1947, when India became free and independent. The new Government of India initiated a process of integration, and Jodhpur was integrated in A.D. 1949 in the present union known as Rajasthan. The region known as Jodhpur is situated in the heart of the desert Thar, on the western part of the present state of Rajasthan (India).

The former rulers of Jodhpur belonged to Rathore clan, who claimed their descent from Rama, the deified King of Ayodhya. The original name of this clan was 'Rashtrakuta' and this word after passing through *Prakrit* has crystallised into 'Rathore'. The Rashtrakuta's ruled over a part of Deccan up to A.D. 973, when they were defeated by Chalukyas and came to Kanauj. They founded the new dynasty of Gaharwar. There were seven kings of this dynasty. The last was Jai Chand. He was defeated and expelled from

his capital Kanauj by Shahabuddin Mohammed Ghori in A.D. 1194. His grandsons, Siaji and Sait Ram offered their services to the chief of Kolumund (in Thar) who was at war with a neighbouring clan. Though victory greeted the chief of Kolumund but Sait Ram met his death. Siaji then conquered the neighbouring tract from the Gohal Rajputs and planted the standard of the Rathores amidst the sand-hills of the river Luni. The foundation of the state of Marwar (Jodhpur) could thus date from A.D. 1212. Rao Chunda, the tenth ruler, extended the frontiers and added Mandore (the ancient capital of Marwar) in A.D. 1381. He was sturdy and robust and through the valour of the sword solidified his position and put the state on a firm and stable foundation. With him began a period of Marwar's greatness and glory. He was killed at Nagore in A.D. 1402. His grandson Rao Jodha (A.D. 1438-88) was a man of remarkable energy and foresight. On May 12, A.D. 1459, he laid the foundation of a new fort (Mehrangarh fort) and also the present city of Jodhpur. Rao Jodha was followed by his two sons, Satal and Suja, in quick succession, and finally in A.D. 1515, Suja's grandson, Rao Ganga, succeeded to the Jodhpur throne. He in collaboration with Maharana Sanga of Mewar (Udaipur) showed exceptional bravery in the historic battle of Khanwa against the Mughal Emperor Babar in A.D. 1527.

Rao Ganga's eldest son Maldev (A.D. 1531-1562) was an illustrious ruler of far-famed importance. It was in the reign of Maldeo that Jodhpur became the most powerful and exalted Hindu principality in northern India. A brave, energetic and ambitious ruler, Maldev at the same time showed the traits of suspicion and unbending obstinacy. He not only extended the territories of the state by conquest, but also transformed the loose feudal system into a compact and centralised state. Ferishta had styled Maldeo as "the most powerful prince in Hindustan", and Jodhpur "had risen to occupy the first place among the independent kingdoms in Rajasthan". His battle against Sher-Shah, the Afghan king

of Delhi, in A.D. 1544 at Sumel (in Jodhpur) shall ever be remembered in the history of medieval India, where the irresistible charge of Jodhpur forces evoked great admiration in Sher-Shah, who when all was over, exclaimed that he had almost lost the kingdom of Hindustan for a handful of bajra (millet). Maldeo died in A.D. 1562, and at his death, "the banner of the empire floated pre-eminent over the *panch-ranga*, the five-coloured flag which had led the clan of Rathores from victory to victory and waved from the sand-hills of Umarkote to the salt lake of Sambhar". Mir Hadi in his 'Preface' to Jehangir's Memoirs writes : "Maldeo was so powerful that he kept up an army of 80,000 horses. He was even superior to Rana Sanga of Mewar in the number of soldiers and extent of territory, and in consequence was always victorious".

## II

The next ruler of significance after Maldeo was Maharaja Jaswant Singh I (A.D. 1638-78). He was "the premier Hindu peer in the Imperial Court after the death of Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Jaipur (A.D. 1667)", and "Jodhpur was the foremost Hindu State of northern India". His long reign removed the mists of ignorance and darkness and learning and arts made great strides in Jodhpur. It provided peace and stability, and the people bathed in a sunshine of glory and splendour. In the war of succession that started during the last days of the Emperor Shahjahan, Jaswant played a notable role in conformity with the wishes of Shahjahan and supported the cause of his eldest son, Dara, against Aurangzeb in the battle of Dharmat (16 April, A.D. 1658). Dharmat proved to be the decisive battle in the war of succession, where despite Jaswant's bravery, the day drifted in favour of Aurangzeb. A number of factors were responsible for the victory of Aurangzeb. Firstly, Aurangzeb's strategy and tactics was superior. The Rajputs, who formed the backbone



of Dara's support, fought to die rather than to win. Valour was useless against the steam-hammer tactics of Aurangzeb, whose cold calculating mind could plan a campaign even as a player plans out the moments on a chess board. Secondly, he relied more on artillery whereas Jaswant's main onslaught was through the power of sword. Thirdly, at a critical juncture, Dara's commander, Kasim Khan had betrayed and joined the camp of Aurangzeb. Fourthly, Jaswant's delayed tactics proved ruinous. Had Jaswant attacked as soon as Aurangzeb appeared on the opposite bank of Narbada, the history of the Mughal Empire might have been turned into a different channel. And lastly, the Rajputs were not wanting in valour, but their peculiar notions of precedence and prestige fatally marred their heroic attempts to serve the cause of their patron (Dara). The Muslim's on Dara's side were treacherous and corrupt and were seduced by Aurangzeb's offer of money and honour. Aurangzeb's victory at Dharmat was followed by another victory at the battle of Samugarh (May 29, A.D. 1658). His victories at Dharmat and Samugarh completely unrooted Dara, and Aurangzeb became the Emperor of Hindustan. The old and feeble father Shahjahan was imprisoned by Aurangzeb, and Dara for sometime engaged in futile flight, and ultimately slain. Aurangzeb officially crowned himself as the Emperor of Hindustan on June 25, A.D. 1658. His reign lasted up to his death in A.D. 1707.

It could be emphatically said that the greatest contribution of Jaswant was the discovery of Veer Durgadas Rathore, who subsequently played a notable role in the history and politics of medieval India.

### III

Veer Durgadas Rathore was born on August 13, A.D. 1638 in Salwa, a village near Jodhpur. His father, Askaran Karnot, occupied an important position in the state of Jodhpur,

during the time of Maharaja Jaswant Singh I. Askaran was ambitious, astute and enterprising. Through the sheer dint of his own merit and loyalty, he carved out a durable position for himself. On account of family circumstances, Askaran did not care about his third son, Durgadas, who remained a neglected and uncared child. By chance an incident happened in A.D. 1655 which brought about a complete change in the life and destiny of Durgadas. In his village at Salwa, Durga had slain a herdsman, who was looking after the state camels; and as such he was summoned in the court of Jaswant. Durga appeared in the court and made a bold defense. In an emphatic tone, full of confidence and calm, Durga accepted the offence. He pleaded that the herdsman had used most derogatory words about the Jodhpur fort by describing it as a 'white ruined roofless house'. He argued that these words against the Royal House of Jodhpur had, in fact, provoked him and the head of the herdsman was cut-off. Maharaja Jaswant Singh I was a shrewd judge of man. He was greatly impressed by the frankness and audacity of Durgadas. As such, instead of punishing Durga, Jaswant was pleased to employ him in his army. On that day Jaswant uttered the prophetic words : "Here is a boy who could stand loyal to the Royal House, even in worst difficulties and acute hardships". When Jaswant came to know that Durga was the son of his close confidant, Askaran; he rebuked the latter for the neglect of the boy.

In September, A.D. 1656, Shahjahan, the Emperor of Hindustan, fell ill. His condition worsened and he appointed his eldest son, Dara, as his successor. The rumours spread that Shahjahan had died. In a trauma of confusion and disorder, there started a war of succession among the sons of Shahjahan, for the Mughal throne. His sons, Shuja in Bengal and Murad in Gujarat crowned themselves, while Aurangzeb marched towards Delhi from Deccan (to wrest the sceptre from Dara). Aurangzeb was a great warrior and a man of indomitable will. He was clever, cunning and crafty

too. Dara feared Aurangzeb most. He, therefore, prepared himself to face the wrath of Aurangzeb. A vast contingent of Imperial army was immediately despatched by Shahjahan, under the command of Maharaja Jaswant Singh, to punish the rebellious brothers, and specially Aurangzeb who was advancing cautiously from Deccan towards Delhi. Dara accompanied Jaswant. The two armies of Jaswant and Aurangzeb met at the battle field of Dharmat and a furious battle raged on April 16, A.D. 1658. Durgadas had also accompanied his master Jaswant. In a most stubborn and decisive fight, Durga made five frontal onslaughts on Aurangzeb, while mounted on a horse. All the attempts of Durga were foiled by the army of Aurangzeb. Badly wounded, Durga was removed from the battle field and sent to Jodhpur. Ultimately, Aurangzeb won the battle of Dharmat.

Aurangzeb was a hardy soldier. His power of will and the quality of endurance was of a high order. He was fanatic and bigotry became the main concern during his long reign. He was well versed in the art and craft of diplomacy, though it was cunning and deceitful. Although Jaswant had fought against Aurangzeb in the battle of Dharmat, but the latter knew well the qualities of Jaswant's bravery. Jaswant was the most powerful Hindu prince in northern India, and Aurangzeb, therefore, through enticements won him over to his side. Aurangzeb utilised Jaswant's services for strengthening the Mughal Empire in the distant parts of India and specially in Khandhar and Kabul. Durgadas always accompanied Jaswant in the military expeditions. He elevated his stature in the eye of Jaswant, because of his superb bravery, dauntless courage and unblemished loyalty. Jaswant had a fondness for Durga, for he could trace in him some of the finest qualities of faithfulness and devotion. Though Jaswant devoted his energies towards the consolidation of the Mughal Empire, but in the heart of hearts, Aurangzeb looked upon him with suspicion, because of his role in Dharmat.

Jaswant was unlucky in respect of his progeny. His two

sons had already died in the battle fields. He was constantly worried about the possible future of his centuries-old ancestral heritage of Jodhpur. His agonies grew dismal in the bleak and rugged mountains of Kabul, as the days rolled by. He fell ill on November 4, A.D. 1678, but his bubble of life was unwilling to depart. Durga was by the side of the ailing master, and knowing well the mental torture of Jaswant; Durga gave a solemn promise that if a posthumous son was born (out of the two pregnant Maharani's of Jaswant, he would take up the gauntlet against Aurangzeb and place the posthumous son on the throne of Jodhpur. Durga's vow was a great solace to Jaswant and he breathed his last on November 28, at Jamrud, far away from Jodhpur. After the death of Jaswant, his two Maharani's attempted to ascend the funeral pyre to become *Sati's*. Durga prevented them from committing this act in the wider interests of Jodhpur. Soon the two Maharani's gave birth to two posthumous sons—the elder was named Ajit and the younger one was Dalthambhan.

When the news of Jaswant's death reached Aurangzeb, a wave of concealed happiness rippled over his face. He saw in it a heaven sent opportunity to extend his control over Jodhpur. He appointed the Mughal officers as *faujdar*, *qiladar* and *kotwal* of Jodhpur on December 25, A.D. 1678 and hurriedly despatched them with immediate instructions to bring the entire territories of Jodhpur under direct Mughal rule. His orders were swiftly carried out for there was no one to offer resistance to the mighty arms of Aurangzeb.

Soon after the second news fell on the ears of Aurangzeb. That the two widowed Maharani's of Jaswant had given birth to two posthumous sons at Jamrud, was a shock to Aurangzeb. Slightly perturbed Aurangzeb marched from Ajmer towards Delhi, the capital of his Empire; with foul and sinister designs tossing to and fro in his mind. He had already ordered that the widowed Maharani's along with the infants must move from Jamrud to Delhi. Among the officers and nobles who escorted the family of deceased Jaswant,

Durgadas was one among them. The Jodhpur caravan reached Delhi in the early A.D. 1679. The widowed Maharani's along with infant Princes were kept under guarded custody by Aurangzeb in the castle of Nurgarh. Aurangzeb now moved ahead with his venomous designs. The Mughal Court became a hub of diplomacy. Offers and bargains floated and Aurangzeb even offered gold and pearls to the nobles and *Sardars* of Jodhpur, with the condition that the widows and infants of deceased Jaswant be allowed to stay in Nurgarh under Imperial care. Durga could feel the cunning eye and sensed the dubious plot of Aurangzeb. He in secret thatched a plan, put two suckling children in place of two infant Princes, fell on the Imperial guards at Nurgarh like a demon of destruction, and galloped towards Jodhpur along with the infant Princes. The widowed Maharani's threw-off the female garments and put on the armour of a warrior and along with Durga fought bravely against the Imperial guards at Nurgarh. Badly wounded the widowed Maharani's died and Durga hurriedly immersed their dead bodies in the holy waters of Jamuna. The Mughals were at the heels of Durga, but the dauntless warrior, despite all difficulties and travails continued his flight towards Jodhpur. On account of terrible hardships the infant Dalthambhan collapsed on the way, but the brave Durga along with Ajit, the last surviving legacy of Jaswant, continued his flight. Ultimately Durga reached Balunda, a village in Jodhpur. He was pained to see that the whole of Jodhpur was ablaze under the Mughal heels. For the safety of the infant Prince Ajit, Durga in disguise moved from Balunda to Kalindari, a tiny hamlet in Sirohi, where he handed over the infant Prince in confidence to a Brahmin lady (Thanvi Brahmin). Durga's close associate Khichi Mukan Das, in the guise of a hermit made his dwellings nearby, to keep a watchful eye on Prince Ajit. The Brahmin lady in concealment started the trust and care of Prince Ajit. Having put Prince Ajit in a secret custody, Durga now sounded the bugle of freedom against the mighty Emperor

Aurangzeb. This struggle for the freedom of Jodhpur lasted for thirty years. To put Prince Ajit on the throne and to free the principality of Jodhpur from Mughal domination were the twin goals of Durga's struggle.

#### IV

Durga's escape and flight from Nurgarh was a terrible blow to Aurangzeb's prestige. This made Aurangzeb furious and his wrath fell on Jodhpur. Maroo (Jodhpur) was transformed into a vast graveyard. The crops burnt, the huts demolished, the temples ravaged, and the people slain mercilessly. So great was the destruction carried on by Khan-i-Jahan, the Commander of Aurangzeb, that in early A.D. 1679, as an evidence of his 'meritorious conduct' he brought cart-loads of idols from Jodhpur to Delhi. These were placed in public places in the Court and the Friday mosque. The humiliation of Maroo poured iron into Durga's soul and he vowed to secure freedom at all costs. Thus began the war of Maroo's independence (meaning thereby, Jodhpur's freedom struggle) which lasted till A.D. 1708.

The brave Durga accepted Aurangzeb's gauntlet. He started the predatory wars and harassing the Mughal outposts. But when all seemed lost, he took recourse to diplomacy. Aurangzeb's two sons, Prince Muazzam (second son) and Prince Muhammed Akbar (fourth son) were looking after Imperial operations in Maroo. Durga tried to persuade Prince Muazzam to revolt against Aurangzeb, but his policy failed. He then established negotiations with Prince Akbar. He told Prince Akbar how his father's bigoted attempt to root out the Rathores was threatening the stability of the Mughal Empire, and urged him to seize the throne and restore the wise policy of his forefathers if he wished to save his heritage from destruction. He showed Prince Akbar plenty of green gardens and offered him the help of 40,000 brave Rathores and unlimited treasures; infact, he recited such magic and

infused romantic ideas into Prince Akbar's head, that he was completely won over. Thus Durga won over Prince Akbar, proclaimed him the Emperor of Hindustan at Nadole, and revolted against Aurangzeb. The combined army of Durga-Akbar marched towards Ajmer, where Aurangzeb was encamped. But Aurangzeb was a shrewd diplomat and he successfully foiled their attempts. Though the revolt dithered but Durga never betrayed Prince Akbar and gave him the shelter. Thereafter, Durga fled towards Jalore and continued the skirmishes. Durga's continued resistance was proving damaging to the Imperial interests. Ultimately Aurangzeb devised a new trick. He offered 8,000 (eight thousand) guineas of gold to Durga with a condition to hand him over his traitorous son, Prince Akbar. Durga refused to oblige and kicked aside the Mughal gold, saying that for him freedom was more important than a basket full of gold.

For Durga, it was difficult to wage a prolonged fight against Aurangzeb. His resources were extremely poor. He, therefore, rushed to the adjoining state of Mewar (A.D. 1680), and got a bounty from Maharana Raj Singh. This boosted up his morale and the struggle of freedom continued unabatingly.

## V

Durga now devised a new strategy to proceed to Deccan. This was his greatest diplomatic trick. The motives were twofold : to divert Aurangzeb's attention towards Deccan, and this could slacken his efforts over Maroo. He thence along with Prince Akbar proceeded to Deccan (A.D. 1681), and got a shelter in the Court of Shambhaji, the son of Shivaji the great. As soon as the news reached Aurangzeb (he put Maroo under the charge of his Commanders) and himself in haste rushed towards Deccan, to capture his rebellious son and to punish Durga. The Deccan adventure ruined Aurangzeb for he could never come out of the coils

of the Marathas. He devoted the maturest period of his life in the Deccan and the cracks and hollows appeared in his Empire. Durga stayed in Deccan for nearly six years and gave "active support to the Marathas in their struggle against the Sidis, the Portuguese and the Mughals". Looked from all angles, Durga's retreat towards Deccan was the greatest diplomatic victory. It unnerved Aurangzeb, entangled him for nearly twenty-five years in the ravines of the South. Aurangzeb's endless war against the Marathas exhausted his resources and ruined the glory of his Empire. Deccan proved to be the graveyard of Aurangzeb's reputation as well as of his body

## VI

Durga kindled the flame of freedom in Maroo which, during his absence, was kept ablaze by indomitable warriors like Champavat Sonag, Champavat Ajab and Champavat Udai. The pitched battle which Champavat Sonag fought at Pundalote (14 November, A.D. 1681) against the enemy shall ever be remembered in the freedom struggle of Maroo. The deadly battle of Degrana (17 November, A.D. 1681) where Champavat Ajab attained the immortal heights of glory, was a significant landmark in the annals of the liberation struggle. The spirits of Sonag and Ajab were carried forward by Champavat Udai, who through his deeds brave, could secure considerable gains against the forces of Aurangzeb. Along with this liberation struggle another incident happened during the absence of Durga, and that was the early appearance of Prince Ajit from the hiding.

Prince Ajit at that time was only of eight years. Durga came to know of Prince Ajit's early appearance very late and was terribly upset because the action taken by Kichi Mukandas in bringing Prince Ajit out of the hiding was untimely and immature. The visions of Maroo's freedom struggle often spurt in Durga's senses in Deccan. Ultimately,



after a gap of six years Durga returned to Maroo (August, A.D. 1687) with a grim determination to strike a last nail in the coffin of the Mughal Empire. Before his return he had already bid farewell to his close comrade Prince Akbar, who from Maharashtra had sailed to the historic land of Persia (A.D. 1687). Durga's arrival in Maroo gave a fillip to the war of independence. A valuable ally had already been gained in Durjansal Hada of Bundi who strengthened the liberation army with an addition of a thousand horse. In A.D. 1687, Durga plundered the Mughal garrisons of Rohtak and Rewari; in A.D. 1689 he fought against the enemy in Jodhpur; and in A.D. 1690, he won a victory over Safi Khan, the Governor of Ajmer. In A.D. 1691, he settled the domestic trouble in Mewar; in A.D. 1692, he repulsed the attack of Mughal Commander Kazim Begh; and in A.D. 1695 he fought a battle in the hilly tracks of Kirmal. He also beheaded Khan Shamsher, the Mughal *Faujdar* of the fortress of Kantaliya, the exact year of this incident is hardly traceable. In A.D. 1696, he returned (after negotiations) the granddaughter of Aurangzeb, Princess Shafiyat-un-nissa to the Emperor. Aurangzeb was surprised at the magnanimity and high character of Durga. Subsequently, Durga also returned Aurangzeb's grand-son, Buland Akhtar to the Emperor. Aurangzeb was extremely happy at this noble gesture of Durga and extended the invitation to him to appear in the Mughal Court. After considerable negotiations, Durga appeared in the Mughal Court at Islampuri, where Aurangzeb bestowed favours on Durga and Prince Ajit both. Durga accepted the favours reluctantly. A peace dawned. But this peace lasted for a brief span of time. Hostilities again started. In A.D. 1703, Durga fought against the Mughal Governor of Gujarat. From A.D. 1703 to A.D. 1707, Durga spearheaded the guerilla warfare in Marwar. He harassed the Mughals so much so that "some of their Commanders were compelled to buy safety by paying *chauth* (tribute) to him". In A.D. 1707, the grand Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb died in

## INTRODUCTION

Deccan. This was a signal to Durga to intensify the liberation struggle. Prince Ajit captured the ancestral fort of Jodhpur on 12 March, A.D. 1707. The Mughals again dethroned Ajit on 19 July, A.D. 1708. Thence Durga and Ajit, along with Jai Singh of Jaipur, defeated the Mughals in the battle of Sambhar, and in the same year recaptured the fort of Jodhpur. Thereafter the new Emperor of Delhi, Bahadur Shah (Shah Alam) recognized Ajit's sovereignty over Jodhpur in June, A.D. 1710.

This is a broad and sketchy story of Maroo's freedom struggle from A.D. 1678 to A.D. 1708 in which Durga played the most notable and praiseworthy role. His greatness ought to be judged on the basis of varied factors. Firstly, he carried on successfully the freedom struggle against the might of Aurangzeb, the Almighty Emperor of Hindustan. Secondly, for a period of thirty years he was alone to face the hammers of Aurangzeb, unmindful of the acute hardships and worst calamities. Thirdly, with practically no resources and no outside help, he carried the liberation struggle to its gloried conclusion, through the sheer force of his leadership and character. And lastly, he never betrayed the trust imposed by his deceased master, Jaswant. It would therefore be correct to say that in the prolonged war with Aurangzeb "the hero Durgadas played such a noble and brave part that his name has become a byword all over Rajputana as the very ideal of chivalry, patriotism, fidelity and self-sacrifice". He was the loyal and valiant fighter to whom "Marwar largely owed her salvation in the long struggle against Aurangzeb". A worthy leader, 'the flower of Rathore chivalry', Durga is one of the immortal figures in the annals of India. Even in worst periods of agony and pain, his integrity was never defiled, not did his noble and humane qualities ever wane. Gifted with extraordinary valour and always true to his vow, Durga is just the embodiment of god, ever born in the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Once the struggle for freedom is over, there comes the struggle for power, in which the bad often tend to drive the good out of the market. Though Durga was above power politics, he had declined the offer of Chief Ministership given by Aji, the Ruler of Indrapur. His image and reputation was so high and strong that it aroused a universal jealousy among the feudal lords, who started poisoning the ears of Aji. There were several causes that led to the growth of misunderstanding between Aji and Durga. Firstly, Aji's early appearance from the hiding, when Durga was away in Deoria, was much contrary to Durga's advice. Secondly, Durga remained the grand-father-in-law of Annapurna, Princess Sahasra-sir-singha who was in his camp, much against the displeasure of Aji. Thirdly, in the battle of Samthar (A.D. 1701), Durga with his own household and retinue had escaped away from the camp of Aji and the Marwar army, most probably because of his independent status and higher fame. This was disliked by Aji and he expressly called upon Durga to encamp along with other nobles in the Marwar army camp. But Durga politely yet firmly declined to accede to Aji's demands. This explicit insistence of Aji greatly distressed Durga. Fourthly, as a Ruler of Indrapur, Aji behaved in a brutal manner towards the close associates of Durga. Jaiji Girdhar Pajmawar Sandhu (a close associate of Durga), who had actively looked after the family of Prince Akbar, was arrested, publicly flogged many times, starved for over six weeks, and left to die, of thirst and hunger while in military confinement (October, A.D. 1702). This and other heinous deeds of Aji were usually disliked by Durga. And lastly, the attitude of feudal lords who surrounded Aji were all piqued as compared to the elevated status and high fame of Durga. They ceaselessly followed the path of intrigue to disrepute Durga in the eye of Aji. The feudal lords ultimately duped Aji, who ordered the enle-

of Durga from Jodhpur in A.D. 1708.

Was Durga exiled from Jodhpur, or was it a self-imposed exile? This is quite an interesting theme for the researchers in history to explore. An eminent living historian, Raghuvir Singh is of the opinion that, "Ajit Singh himself never ordered Durgadas to go into exile at any time", and "he should be acquitted once for all of this recurring charge against him". He states that it was "a self-imposed exile" or a "voluntary exile". This view is also supported by historians like Jagdish Singh Gehlot and Shymal Das. Even if we agree that Ajit never ordered for exile of Durga, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that Ajit created the situation under which Durga had to leave Jodhpur. To create a situation is as bad as issuing the orders for exile. It would perhaps be relevant to quote Col. James Tod : "There is one stain on the memory of Ajit which, though unnoticed in the chronicle, is too well ascertained to be omitted in a summary of his character. . . . The heroic Durgadas, the preserver of his infancy, the instructor of his youth, the guide of his manhood, lived to confirm the proverb, 'Put not thy faith in the Princes'. He, who by repeated instances of exalted self-denial, had refused wealth and honours that might have raised himself from his vassal condition to an equality with his sovereign, was banished from the land which his integrity, wisdom, and valour had preserved. Why, or when, Ajit loaded himself with this indelible infamy was not known; the fact was incidentally discovered in searching a collection of original news papers written from the camp of Bahadur Shah (discovered by James Tod amongst the Mewar archives), in one of which it was stated, that Durgadas was encamped with his household retainers on the banks of the Peshula lake at Udaipur, and receiving daily five hundred rupees for his support from the Rana; who when called on by the King (Bahadur Shah) to surrender him, magnanimously refused. Imagining that Ajit had been compelled to this painful sacrifice, which is not noticed in the annals, the compiler mentioned it to a *Yati*

deeply marked in all the events and transactions of this state. Aware of the prominence which is not overlooked by the British he immediately repeated the couplet composed on the occasion :

Durga Das-in Kar-jun  
Gad, Gungad !

Durga was killed, and Gungad his son) given as a shrewd

Answer, it is not my intention to enter into this controversy. Let the researchers probe deep into the realities of the situation. Killed from Marwar, Durga stayed in Mewar and rendered conspicuous services to the Maharana for nearly seven years and thereafter went back to his home in Udaipur, where he died on 22 November, A.D. 1774.

## VIII

The historians have showered British praise on the role of Durgadas. "But for his twenty-five years' unflinching exertion and wise conduct", writes J. M. Sankar, "17th Singh could not have secured his father's throne.... Fighting against terrible odds and a host of enemies on every side, with distrust and wavering among his own countrymen, he kept the cause of his chieftainship unshaken. Mightier gods could not shake this constant hero. Almost alone among the Rathores he displayed a rare combination of the dash and reckless valour of a Rajput soldier with tact, diplomacy and organisation". "A leader of rare ability", states another historian, "Durga was a man of undimmed heroism, inflexible determination, unwavering loyalty, and confined in himself all the requisite qualities of an efficient general". And "it was the genius of Durgadas Rathore, which organized the Rajput opposition that Amargadh had to face no less in intensity than his Marwar enemies". The achievements of Durgadas are summed up excellently by Col. James Tod, when he writes : "What a splendid example is the heroic Durgadas, of all that constitutes the glory of the Rajput. Valour, loyalty,

integrity, combined with prudence in all the difficulties which surrounded him, are qualities which entitle him to the admiration which his memory continues to enjoy. The temptations held out to him were almost irresistible.... Durga had, indeed, but to name his reward; but as the bard justly says, he was *amol* (beyond all price) and *anokha* (unique). Not even revenge, so dear to the Rajput, turned him aside from the dictates of true honour.... But, to conclude our eulogy in the words of the bard : he has reaped the immortality destined for good deeds; his memory is cherished, his actions are the theme of constant praise, and his picture on his white horse, old, yet in vigour, is familiar amongst the collections of portraits of Rajputana". Who could dare to refute the following expression in rhyme of Col. G. H. Trevor :

Heroic Durga Das  
A name for evermore our country's boast  
His virtues those of gods above surpass.

## IX

In the hall of the worthies of history, Durga stands on a very high pedestal of renown and honour. In the bosom of its yore, there are throbbing tales of warriors and rulers, but there is none that stands near to Durga in selfless devotion to a cause and the pristine loftiness of his soul. The streams of devotion and fidelity; of endurance and nobleness; and of heroism and sacrifice; pulsate in unending flow in the life and deeds of Durga. His undefiled soul-force was so elate and lofty that Durga could safely be styled as one of the greatest exponents of freedom that medieval India has ever produced. The magnetic power of his sword; the charm of his charisma; and the rippling brooks of humanism were so deep and pervading, that Durga had left an everlasting impression in the annals of Rajasthan, nay that of India. In the glories of Marwar,

the glorious Durga shall for ever illumine in the vault of her heaven, like the glamour of a full moon. Let me depict it in a verse :

Overbrimmed with grace  
And embalmed with truth;  
The soulful Durga  
Strikes his note far and wide  
In Maroo's fretted vault of heaven;  
Durga, the unconquerable Will  
And courage never to submit or yield;  
Washed marvellously with pain  
Beams in the glamour of a full moon  
Over the azures of the Thar;  
And behold  
Here moves Durga, the shaping force  
Walking, watching and guiding  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

X

Ever since the days of the Greeks, the tormented men of the world have hardly been able either to realise the rule by a 'philosopher-king', or to cultivate the higher forms of virtues. The mankind is still smarting under the heels of tyrants and demagogues, armed with uncontrolled authority. The brute quest for power has intensified to an alarming magnitude that rarely after centuries a man like Lord Buddha, Durga or Gandhi is born. One could locate a few personages in the annals of the world, who inspire the soul of an individual. One such spotless and distinguished character was that of Veer Durga. In him one could trace in abundance the perennial fountains of virtues and the magnanimous ideals of perfection, ever throbbing in glee and enchantment. Though himself never a Ruler or a King, but he could dare to put the nobleness of humanism into use and practice in carrying forward the freedom struggle of Maroo for a span of three

decades. The story of Durga's life is a story of sacrifice and of pain, still the lustre of the granules of philosophy in him, never did it wane or fell dim. It opens up the impressive casements towards that fairy-land, where the visions of freedom and liberty; of bravery and loyalty; and of the lofty power of the soul; aglow eternally in glory abandon. For the poet, Durga has been a fathomless source of inspiration and boundless joy. It is with this intensity of feelings that the poet has composed these Verses on Veer Durgadas Rathore. One must after all confess that poetry is not history, for many aspects of the life and times of Durga have not been touched upon in these verses. Poetry is the highest form of creative writing; it is the immortal muse of fancy and delight. The muse of Durga's life and his message have been distilled in the viewless wings of poesy, which I am sure, would receive wide acclamation from amongst all those who have respect and admiration for the grand ideals of freedom, and for all those honourable principles which have been sadly neglected in the life and thought of alienated men of the contemporary age. Let the 'future shock' of mankind be absorbed in the divinely ordained ideals of Durga. Let the dread of hollow dens and gloomy caves for ever fade; let the fear of torrential waves and surging tides for ever decline; and let a new man arise over the ashes of the dead; over the embers of Durga which beckon us across the firmament, in the blazon fanfare of everflowing blithe and bliss. Let me state it in a verse :

Oh ! the surly brute !  
 Why grope like a greedy beast ?  
 Disrooted, in the dead of night  
 Over perilous glooms and dolorous woes;  
 Thou minutes  
 Art hastening to its end  
 Like the waves that strike the pebbled shore;  
 Come along !



Roll in the azure brow of Durga  
 Where hoary Time, no wrinkles write;  
 For Durga is ever joyous  
 Like rain-awaken'd flowers;  
 He is the image of angel  
 Guiltless, spotless and sublime  
 An endless fountain of immortal drink;  
 Where perennial charms  
 Like the wings of a dove  
 Glimmer in his ruddy soul;  
 Where even pain is a grace  
 And sallies of youth cheer  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's example is immanent, not transcendental, where humanism is interfused with the deeds; it is not something distant and apart, but all around us and as near as hands and feet. The fish does not leap into the air to find the natural element, neither does the eagle plunge below the water; why, then, we are groping in the impale and think that our spiritual home is remote from earth, in outer space? Durga's world-shaking deeds, his sinewy thread, is stirring and roving freely over the sands of the Thar. Let the clay-shuttered doors and the darkness of the grave for ever disappear; and let the vision of Durga's ladder extending from earth to heaven, descend in thy purer mind in unending, dateless grace. Let Durga's deeds of glory floating over the sands of the Thar, refresh thy thoughts with tranquil restoration. Let thy languid body and woeful wan, reawaken in purest ray serene, over the lofty loveliness, over the radiance and unbroken splendour of Durga. Make haste, Oh friend! make haste! discard thy old frailties and cultivate calm and solemn feelings in the elate metre of Durga's music, before thy dust falls to the urn. This, then, is the message of my passion poesy.

— L. S. RATHORE

## *P r e f a c e*

I have never derived such pleasure and happiness par excellence in my life as I did in composing this epic on Veer Durgadas Rathore. The reasons, perhaps, are not difficult to seek. The art of composing poems in itself is a pleasurable pursuit, where rue and woe for ever wane. This art becomes still more joyous and rapturous when one is engaged in composing verses on the hero of one's choice : the hero in whose life and deeds the deathless virtues pulsate in glory and glee. The noble qualities and lofty human values that Durga pursued all his life, despite agony and tribulations, have been a source of endless ecstasy to me. Often, I have experienced, while composing this epic, that the elevated soul of Durga was constantly beckoning me from the eternal heaven. These verses, I feel, are nothing but his revelation, both sacred and divine.

This epic is based on the struggles and achievements of Durga, who played a notable role in the history and politics of medieval Marwar (Jodhpur), nay, that of India, particularly during the period extending from A.D. 1678 to 1708. It was the period when Durga carried out successfully the struggle for Maroo's freedom, against the might of Emperor Aurangzeb. Durga's struggle for freedom lasted for nearly thirty years. This epic is not only a narrative of the major events, but it is replete with a message of life. It is an attempt to rediscover the qualities that make a perfect man. A perfect or ideal man is one in whom the qualities of Durga reside. What those qualities are, need not be elaborated here. It is better to seek an answer from the pages of the epic itself.

The true merit of this epic, in my opinion, is the sublime expression of a message of human life. It is a message of freedom, of sacrifice, and of devotion to a noble cause. It is a message of character, of bravery, and of true religion. It is a message of loyalty, of attachment, and of friendship. It is a message of struggle, of endurance, and of the power of Will. It is a message that repudiates the baneful influences of power, of lowly feudal intrigues, and of the ungrateful nature of a man. In short, this epic reflects both the good and evil

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Over the crowded corridors of Time  
Over the scorched sands of the Thar;  
Where his fountain of bliss  
Arouses the droopy souls;  
Where his fragrant remembrance  
Delights the gloomy hearts  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Creation and existence  
Endurance and sacrifice  
Toil for freedom  
Adherence to a vow;  
All enshrined in the sacred soul of Durga  
Glimmer in perpetual light;  
That blazes and blazes  
In realms beyond;  
Of mystic visage  
Of abundant grace  
Of blessed dazzling heights;  
Where the sick labyrinth of grief sinks  
And rime of age declines;  
Where wicked pain blazes  
Into a posthumous delight  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Chantings of Durga  
Spells, incantations galore;  
Keeps at bay  
All thy clouded grey;  
Where blemishes banish  
And piles of sorrows sink;  
Seething darkness trembling flees  
In a full burst of inspiration;  
For he alone is a peerless font  
Of infinite grace and love  
Of freedom's lofty heights

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga is the gleam  
The blessed guide;  
He is all joy  
All rapturous mirth  
A swelling rhapsody  
Of lofty sublimity;  
He is the emerald pride  
The mellowest zest;  
Like a true votary, I burst in frenzied delight  
Around his soulful hymns;  
Where all my ageless sins shatter into fragments  
The aches and pains forever fade;  
Where I sip from a fabled chalice of honey  
In his immaculate bliss  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

How long ! In the whirl of life  
I have tossed  
In malice and spite;  
Over false and spurious paths  
Over stagnant pits and dens;  
In the valley of life's  
Where past is distress  
Present a pain  
And future an enigma;  
Where tempestuous fights and raging quarrels  
Have made my life a foul curse;  
Now come ! Durga come !  
Stretch out thy splendid hand  
To help me forget  
All pains, pangs and agony  
And abandon  
The dolorous miseries of life  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The virtuous Durga  
 Ever gleaming in gorgeous splendour;  
 Now come ! Come in enchanting grace  
 Fly and glide like an eagle  
 Open out thy charming wings  
 And bestow thy divine favour;  
 Where I catch a glimpse of thy splendid sway  
 In pulsating joy  
 And ever rest  
 In the never-ending benediction;  
 Where in maddened dance  
 I sing thy gloried deeds  
 All along my remaining life  
 In the storms of the desert  
 In the furnace of solar fires  
 Or in the cool of moonbeams;  
 For thou art a moon and the sun  
 Eternal and ever-lasting  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

How long ! Have I rambled  
 Over the paths of meaningless life  
 Full of desires, passions and lust  
 Of clever means to some stupid end;  
 How long ! Have I loitered  
 In endless blind endeavour  
 Into the low tunnels of obscurity  
 Into the gloom of monotonous doom;  
 Where my springs have run dry  
 The streamlets parched  
 The joys crumble as an aged monument  
 And the bricks fall away against the tempests of life;  
 Now come ! Durga come !  
 Come with all your enthralling charm  
 And pull me out of the rabble  
 Out of the woods of entangled desires

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

How long ! I struggled hard  
In the marshy land of prideful mirth;  
Lost in dull  
And dingy dens  
I wandered aimlessly  
In the mazy lanes;  
I rolled and revelled  
In playful tides all pale;  
Never did I repose  
In the balmy bower of thy kindness;  
Dear Durga ! the winsome soul  
Now hear my wailful cry;  
Take me to thy worthy path  
To thy bountiful bliss;  
Take me to thy sunny retreat  
To thy bright abode  
Where joyous rays of sunshine pour;  
Where face to face  
In an explosion of love  
I see You  
And be You.

Bless me ! Oh, Durga by thy radiance  
Bless me by thy heavenly touch  
Bless me by thy benign grace;  
Where I cross the darkened fences of hell  
Where I taste the honey of thy matchless character  
Where I regain my will to freedom at thy lotus treat  
Where I absorb in my life all thy glittering deeds;  
Where in intense fervour I recollect thy sacrifices  
And never to forget thee  
But forever emulate thy example  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

## *In the Sandy Wastes of Marwar*

Durga hailed from Maroo  
Which extends her fierce domain  
To remote and desolate horizons  
Of the desert Thar  
In the state of Rajasthan  
On the western fringe of India;  
Where in her capacious womb  
Fabulous lives from time immemorial pulsate;  
Where countless *Thermophilae's* fought  
And hundreds of *Leptoides* stired up  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo, Marudhar or Maroochali  
Are sanskrit variations  
For Marwar or Jodhpur, the land without water;  
Of sterile and scanty vegetation  
Of lean and prickly shrubs  
Of ever-present dunes and barren wasteland  
Sprawling over her extensive domain  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Afire in summer  
The sun beats savagely  
Upon the weary waste of sands  
Making each day gloomy;  
Its blinding heat, burning fiercely  
In volcanic anger red  
Like the fire, with well-dried logs;  
Suck away the coarse weed  
Burn up every blade of grass  
And not a leaf is on the bough;

Such is the glowing Maroo  
Where the stream of joy goes dry  
The fonts of cheer parch;  
And the wild and deceptive images  
Of endless mirages  
In fierce blaze float  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The rains rarely descend  
To quench the thirst of parched sands  
With hungry eyes, the Maroo awaits  
In futile gaze, towards the scudding clouds  
For a quickening drop of rain;  
In the rainless Thar  
Natural calamities often frown  
Devastating famines in anger march  
And engulf in its fumes  
Hundreds of love without a trace  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo's soft and dull sands  
Provoked to fury by the blazing sun  
In wrathful vengeance hurt;  
Savage winds in fierce fury  
Dusty storms in anger roar  
Marauding whirlwinds in severity rage  
Over the sandy wastes in demonic passion;  
Still the unruffled, steadfast Maroo  
Unmindful of her pangs and troubles  
Stands unfazed in tender grace  
In unshaken, tenacious faith  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The centuries of pain and torment  
Of ravages and famines  
Of calamities and adversities



VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Have neither dimmed her glamour  
Nor diluted her endurance  
Nor defiled her tranquil calm  
And in concealed pain, the uncomplaining Maroo  
Beckons, in the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo's vault of heaven, adorned with gems  
Of bravery and chivalry; of loyalty and fidelity  
Of hope and faith; of love and romance  
Shine in bright and amber light  
In pageant fine;  
Her plenteous inmost  
Sogged in the blood of heroes  
Pulsate and dance  
Flow, run full in youth  
Pouring streams of glory on desert sands  
In the crescent beams of the fair moon  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Beneath Maroo's placid panorama  
In slumber sleep  
The scattered hills of Aravali;  
Where in its expanse, the trees to every crevice cling  
And over the wooded hollow their branches hang;  
Where all splintered rocks  
Descend to hell, or ascend to heaven;  
Where in its obscure, unlit meadow  
The dark and silty earth receives  
Its only carpet from the fallen leaves;  
Such is the cavernous breast of Aravali  
Which gave shade and shelter, a repose  
To many a hero;  
Who sung the paeans of freedom  
And strove unceasingly  
Against the sullen dread of the Mughals  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Though not blessed by rains  
Never did Maroo repent  
For the providence has conferred a blessing divine  
In the virgin fecund land;  
Where the flower of chivalry sprang to life  
Naturally and without fanfare;  
Where her valiant sons and daughters  
Walk in dignity with their heads held high  
With pride in their heart and resolution in their step  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo ! My favour'd land  
Home of arts and arms  
For manly traits, and for female charms;  
Played the choicest part  
In medieval Hindustan;  
Her imposing forts and castles  
Still glisten with the blood of fallen heroes  
And recall the glorious past  
Beckoning the proud to the bower of the gone;  
Her *Sati's* and heroines  
With a wreath of ruddy gold  
Worn upon their wrists;  
And jewelled fingers folded  
In memory of their lords;  
Embraced the pyre of flames  
Amid the glorious roll of drums  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Maroo !  
Where history laughs in glory, like the buds of spring  
In gay gladness, in mellow richness;  
Flooding the mind with everlasting romance  
Of the death-dance of her *Sati's*  
In the quivering tabernacle of history;  
Whose prints on the walls of the forts

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Decorated with sandal and *sindoor* haze upon it;  
In amused expression, throw into delight  
Like the unfolding of blossoms;  
And glow like the grains of gold  
Engraved in the lustre of the sands;  
Dreamlike, with beaming eyes, fill the air with dreamy softness;  
And sparkle in secret, like buried jewels that glimmer;  
Hail to the *Sati's* ! Hail to the heroines of Maroo !  
Musing on the walls of forts  
In ovation splendid  
Are like the nests of yester years  
From where the joyous birds have taken wing  
Leaving behind their footprints  
In the bowers of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Maroo !  
Her pilgrimage begins in amused joy;  
Her ever-flowing fountains of spotless fame  
Blossom in garlands, gay and green;  
Where ingratitude's unkindly frost  
And the veils of gloom, forever wane;  
Where the golden sands  
Heralding in exalted perfection  
Emblazon in the bosom of her deep;  
Where bounteous gold and silver in refulgence beam  
And heroism bounce in the bowl of her heritage  
In throbs of thrill  
In pulsating tremors of emotion;  
And glance in countenance divine  
Keeping a vigil in the wintry dark;  
And sparkle like a polished gem  
In the magic mirror of the morn  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Immaculate font of glory !

Undefined mansion of heroism !  
My trustworthy land of Maroo  
Ever effulgent are the deeds of bravery;  
Her solitary sands in cheerful solitude  
Abound in matchless deeds of chivalry;  
Where radiant particles in joyful rapture  
In a vivacious burst of jubilation  
Leap and frolic  
In the undulating stretches of greyish dunes  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

## *Durga : The Saviour of Maroo*

In Maroo's honeyed bower  
 In the venerable mirror of the past  
 Her annals and anecdotes  
 Draped in glory reflect;  
 In her delicious verberna  
 Enthusiastic tales teem;  
 Of spirited deeds of brave  
 Of virile and vigorous souls  
 Writ large over her panoramic expanse  
 In the verdure of the gone  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her embellished bygone  
 In ardent glee and mirthful laughter  
 The heroes flash and beam  
 Rise and fall, like the ebb and tide of a sea;  
 Over her ample breasts  
 In thrill, the history pulsates  
 In joyous choral dance;  
 Where in her tryst with destiny  
 Tingle many a tale of sacrifice;  
 Hail to thee ! the blissful Maroo  
 Never did thy life-force exhaust  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her saturated loam  
 Vibrant waves in torrential streams flow  
 Ever surging in honourable fame  
 And enriched in tales of trust;  
 In her flowery bosom  
 Manifold tulips and flowers bloom

## DURGA : THE SAVIOUR OF MAROO

One that surpasses all  
In will and vigour born;  
Is that of Veer Durga  
The bravest of the brave  
Ever bright, fresh and strong  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her radiant azure  
Ornamented in the florid prime;  
Refulgent stars in bright array glitter  
Ever sparkling in lively gay;  
Where the sparking star of Durga  
Sparkles with unfailing vigour  
In endless lustre, gleam  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her wonderful bed  
Flowers in the garlands of glory laugh  
One fragrant and beautiful flower  
Neither evanescenced nor faded  
Whose aroma spread with the passage of time;  
Is that of Veer Durga  
Beaming in beauteous splendour  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her heavenly orchard  
Varied fruits ripe and rot  
A perennially fresh and pure  
Never defiled or polluted  
Who stands in mellow fame  
Is that of Veer Durga  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her heavenly galaxy  
The heroes crowd on every side  
Shine like sparkling gems;

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Where the brightest gem of purest light  
An eternal and changeless gem  
Is that of Veer Durga  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her golden firmament  
A spirit-like, heroic deity revolves  
Never dimmed or fell shadowy  
As years roll, in magnitude it enlarges;  
Durga, a great-souled, sacred deity  
From heaven pours  
Sweet, mellifluous trickles of manna  
Of loyalty, courage and endurance  
Of unflinching adherence to a cause  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her hall of musical concert  
Series of melodious notes in harmony float  
Where the soulful melody of exceeding excellence, of Durga  
In joyous abandon proclaims :  
Worry not the pangs of adversity  
The spirit of man is unbending  
Keep thy banner of freedom afloat  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In her luxuriant inmost  
Adorned with the gems of deposited bravery;  
Arises the blessed font of Durga  
The saviour of Maroo;  
Radiating like the dawn in the aurora  
Nods in gracious benison;  
And beckons in eternal glory  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*A Windfall for Durga*

Born in the year 1638 A.D.  
In the hamlet of Salwa  
25 kms. north-east of Jodhpur;  
Durga, the third son of Askaran  
Remained a neglected, and uncared child;  
His father, a valorous soldier  
A trusted confidant of Jaswant  
Was a premier noble  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

One dawn as the sands from silence awoke  
As the sun broke the slumbers of the dark;  
And climbed towards the heights of heaven  
Stretching its hands upon sand-dunes;  
On that fateful day  
The annals say  
That Durga slew a herdsman  
Who looked after the state camels  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! summoned in Jaswant's court  
Where calmly, courageously, boldly  
Through the use of brief and pithy words  
Neat like the water of a mountain stream;  
Durga made a striking defence  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

'A white ruined roofless house !'  
That was the hideous phrase  
Employed by the herdsman; argued Durga;  
A repulsive remark against the royal House



Which provoked him to fury;  
And in instant rage  
The head was cut-off  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Jaswant, a great ruler  
A shrewd judge of man;  
Never duped by any villian  
Pierced deep into interesting lad;  
And could trace  
The visible marks of loyalty  
Glimmering over his forehead;  
Thence in prophetic voice he cried :  
Here is a boy  
Never could he betray  
Or fall short of his expectations;  
Here is a lad  
Never could he shrink from the pangs of adversity  
Or show the signs of pliancy;  
An undefiled, pure gem  
Could be the saviour of Maroo  
In the shadowy wail of future  
In murky dread that lay concealed  
In the inscrutable bosom of unknown future  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah ! what a windfall ?  
What a fortune ?  
Instead of punishment  
Durga got a reward  
A job in the army of Jaswant  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In the womb of history  
Into the future realms of space  
The thunders of fortune sparkle;

Where past and present destinies  
Mingle beneath Time's flowing tide;  
Its hidden footprints, its great world of light  
Man can visualise  
Through insight and vision sharp;  
Lo ! an opportunity dawned  
The Emperor Shahjahan grown weary and sick;  
Rumour spread that he died  
A war of succession flared;  
Out of his four sons  
Dara, the eldest, was the fondest;  
Shuja revolted, crowned himself in Bengal  
and Murad in Gujarat;  
Aurang from the Deccan marched  
To wrest the sceptre of Hindustan;  
Lo ! commenced a furious battle  
The battle of Dharmat;  
Where Jaswant appeared in favour of Dara  
Along with reliable Durga;  
Who in ribs of steel, mounting on a horse  
Galloping in furious;  
In loud peals of battle cry  
Thrust himself in aggressive posture  
And made frontal onslaughts on Aurang  
Not once, but five times;  
The assaults foiled by the Mughals  
Badly wounded, Durga's brow with blood was wet  
And taken to Jodhpur  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

## *Glory to Jaswant !*

Glory to Jaswant !  
 A gem radiating incomparable light  
 Brightly like a ruby;  
 In foremost place, he adorned  
 The Court of Shahjahan, the Emperor of Hindustan;  
 When Maroo in blissful days  
 Enjoyed peace and happiness  
 Like a well-governed kingdom  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !  
 The most powerful Hindu Prince in Hindustan;  
 Whose mighty glitter of the sword  
 Applauded in loud acclamation  
 In Kabul and Kandhar, in Jamrud and Lahore  
 In Gujarat and Malwa, and in the rocky clefts of Deccan  
 Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !  
 Whose halo of supremacy  
 None could rival;  
 Even the turbulent *Pathans*  
 Bowed to his sword;  
 And the Emperor Shahjahan in person bestowed decorations  
 and honours  
 Pouring forth his heart and his wine together in endless  
 profusion  
 On the stalwart Prince  
 Who hailed from  
 The sandy wastes of Marwar.

## GLORY TO JASWANT !

Glory to Jaswant !  
Whose long and glorious reign  
Like a lamp, illumined Maroo's pathways;  
And her countenance and her being  
In merry, jovial smiles  
Glimmered and shone brilliantly  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !  
Who removed the mists of ignorance;  
And manifold flowers of art and culture  
Bloomed in Maroo;  
Pouring out their souls in fealty  
Like the mellow and radiant moonlight  
People gave their best ungrudgingly  
To strengthen the hands of their fair prince  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !  
Who mounting his steed *Maboob*  
With spear in hand  
Marched at the head of Shahjahan's Imperial army  
In support to Dara;  
In the war of succession  
To face the wrath of Aurang  
The relentless strokes of fate  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !  
The exploits of whose army  
Made *shesnag* writhe in agony  
In the famous battle of Dharmat;  
Where the din of swords and shields  
Disturbed the eternal silence of the forests;  
Where soldiers swam in an ocean of blood  
To overcome the shame and the humiliation of defeat;

Where over the leafy corridors, the last bugle sounded  
And the mansion of the sun, they gained  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !  
Covered with wounds and blood, like a famished lion  
Never betrayed Dara:  
Though fortune disappeared  
In the pathless dunes of the bleak desert  
In the bloody pool of Dharmat:  
Where but for the treachery of Kasim Khan  
The streams of history would have flowed in a different  
course  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !  
Though his fortune wrecked at Dharmat  
Still clung to the aged Emperor Shahjahan  
In untending vigour  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !  
Though defeated at Dharmat  
Where the day drifted towards Aurang  
Who lifted the golden crown of Hindustan;  
And humiliated Dara  
Made Shahjahan a prisoner in the fort of Agra;  
Still the great Jaswant  
Moved onward over shifting sands  
Through frightful wilderness  
Across the blazing fires of Aurang  
And kept the glory of *Pancha-ranga* afloat  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !  
Whose fear like shadows dark

## GLORY TO JASWANT !

Hovered over Aurang  
The new Emperor of Hindustan;  
Who through tactful diplomacy  
Came to terms with Jaswant;  
The most bounteous Prince  
Whose sword was like a bolt of the thunder  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Jaswant !  
Who even in the Imperial Court of Aurang  
Never compromised the honour of the land;  
Who in the far-flung distances  
Of Peshawar and Kandhar  
Proved the valour of his sword;  
And earned plenteous glory  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*The Death of Jaswant*

Lo ! the axle revolved  
And the chariot of Time moved on  
Turning remorselessly the wheels of destiny;  
And a ominous darkness  
Clenched Jaswant's soul fast;  
Drownsed in exhaustion  
Shadows of gloom lengthened;  
Quivering in the wings of sleep  
Caressed by the moonless waves of death;  
Bubble of life locked up in his heart  
Unwilling to depart;  
Pain leapt like a prowling beast  
To grip and tear  
His hopes with grinding claws and fangs;  
The death stared  
In shapeless gloom blind with smoke  
And encircled him in a web of coils;  
Lo ! courage sprung suddenly  
In rare ethereal glimmer  
Like the last flicker of a worn-out candle;  
And the most powerful Prince in Hindustan  
In anguish  
Monæd the last song of grief :  
Withered are the hopes  
Like a leaf that departs;  
Gone are the visions  
In the billows of surging seas;  
Like a shipwrecked person  
Hopeless in despair;  
A horror drifts  
In shadows pale

## THE DEATH OF JASWANT

In the sunset of my life;  
His footfall knocks !  
Wait ! Oh, heaven's, wait !  
No heir to the throne of Maroo !  
On thorns of agony  
On weeds of pain  
She shall bleed, profusely  
In a trauma of helplessness;  
The only hope.....an elusive hope  
Lay concealed  
In the womb of the Maharani  
What shall be thy destiny ?  
God alone knows !  
Even a posthumous son ! A God's blessing  
Aurang in vindictiveness  
Shall cut him to pieces;  
His explosive blasts  
In ablaze  
Shall burn and blacken  
Bump-off  
The splendour of Maroo;  
For never could he  
Tolerate a beady necklet  
Around her neck;  
Who could face the wrath of Aurang ?  
The bite of his teeth  
The strokes of his hammers  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! a cloudy veil dimmed Jaswant's vision  
Hope like moths began to leap into the flame;  
His body grew limp and weak  
And the hands and feet in trembling shake;  
In the distant land of Jamrud  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.



Hail to Durga ! Spotless in devotion !  
 And holding firm Jaswant's body  
 At his death bed;  
 Sensed the piteous cry  
 The bemoaning of his master;  
 The mournful babbling of a dying man  
 Touched the innermost springs of loyalty;  
 And thence Durga spoke :  
 Peace ! Peace ! Peace !  
 Come ! Oh, generous peace !  
 Come along in wings divine  
 Over the vales and dales  
 Over the streams and brooklets;  
 And carry my master's soul  
 To thy harbour of eternal bliss;  
 Once for all  
 To thy blest abode of happiness;  
 Bewail not ! my beloved master !  
 Shed aside thy pain !  
 Abandon thy sorrows !  
 For the blossoms of Maroo  
 None dare to outrage;  
 Her modesty  
 None dare to violate;  
 Her honour  
 In unblemished beauty  
 Shall forever bloom  
 In grace abandon;  
 This is a vow  
 Promise ! Promise ! Promise !  
 It is a solemn promise  
 Firm and final !  
 Descend now ! Oh, the gentlest peace  
 Descend in all thy magnificence;  
 Open wide thy gates of heaven  
 Emblazoned heralds of glory;

And take my master  
 Along with thee  
 In thy pearly chariot  
 Beaming with lights and colours;  
 And fly towards the boundless Thar  
 Where happiness and harmony abound  
 In her deep and copious bosom  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The intensity of agony abated  
 Anguish waned and pain lessened;  
 The light faded in Jaswant's eyes  
 And the shadows of eternal sleep closed on him;  
 From the far-off Jamrud  
 Flew the life bird;  
 Towards the eternity of the Thar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A pall of gloom spread  
 The Maharani's of the deceased Jaswant  
 With the mortal remains of their husband  
 Ascended the funeral pyre  
 To become *Sati's*;  
 A widespread custom  
 Among the ladies of warriors  
 Who preferred to embrace the flames  
 Instead of being defiled by the infidels;  
 The practice of *Sati*  
 Obnoxious in an age of reason and science  
 Was an honourable way of life in medieval Hindustan;  
 Values based on soul-force  
 Decline as civilization advances  
 Or fade as fanaticism grows dim;  
 But Durga prevailed upon the Maharani's  
 Prevented them from ascending the funeral pyre  
 In the interests of

The sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Durga ! the flower of Maroo's chivalry  
Who could crush him to pulp ?  
Who could destroy his character ?  
Or grind his endurance;  
He alone and none else  
Could have given the vow;  
To put the posthumous son of Jaswant on the throne  
To safeguard the freedom of Maroo  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Durga ! the valiant son of Maroo !  
Who pushed ahead unhesitatingly  
His unwavering devotion to a cause;  
Through efforts  
That never fell short;  
And waged a long and hard struggle for three decades  
Against the might of Aurang  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*The Vindictive Aurang*

Maroo with a broken heart  
 In the weary gloom of pain;  
 Her fortune suffered  
 A mighty, murderous blow;  
 Shivering in the ghostly dusk  
 From torturous, naked shame;  
 And grieved Jaswant's death  
 In mournful tears;  
 For gone were the days  
 When Maroo could stand on her legs  
 In the sunny sands of the Thar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Her deceased ruler Jaswant  
 Proved the worth of his valour  
 And kept afloat the flag of the Mughal Empire  
 In Afghanistan and Kandhar;  
 But Aurang  
 Never did he forget the past;  
 Of Jaswant's support to Dara in Dharmat  
 Of his role in the battle of Khajwa;  
 And shadows of suspicion lengthened  
 Underneath the brows of Aurang  
 Who through artful eye  
 Followed and watched closely  
 The moves of Jaswant  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The news of Jaswant's demise  
 Fell on the ears of Aurang  
 When in repose

On the banks of Anna lake  
 In the heart of Ajmer;  
 In bloated pride  
 A swollen streak of joy  
 Rippled over his face;  
 And jealousy gushed forth  
 In a sudden flow of intense delight;  
 And suddenly  
 The wicked in Aurang  
 Burst in voice raised :  
 Ah ! A Providence given opportunity !  
 A blessing from heaven !  
 For the heathen is dead  
 Maroo is a widow;  
 Let her weep  
 In the wilderness of the Thar;  
 And, Allah be praised !  
 No heir for Maroo  
 Let her widowhood  
 In utter wails and woes  
 Stretch itself on the savage thorns of the Thar;  
 For who could dare  
 To put *sindoor* on her forehead;  
 Who could hinder the path  
 Or smash the dreams  
 Of the Emperor of Hindustan ?  
 Who could venture  
 To block the path  
 Of the mighty *Badshah* of the land ?  
 Opportune is the time  
 To satisfy the raging appetite  
 By destroying the glory of Maroo;  
 Opportune is the day  
 To rape and ravish  
 And to mingle into dust  
 The enchantment of her chastity

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang's lust got the better of him  
His hunger raged intensely  
To envelope the whole of Maroo;  
The black night unleashed its shell-shocks  
The goblin was out of the den  
Prowled in the dark  
Showed the dreadful sharpness of his teeth;  
And in wrathful mood  
He advanced smashingly  
To cross the Rubicon  
Before day turned into night;  
To wreck the remains of Maroo  
And to break her body and soul;  
To destroy the memory of Jaswant  
And to roast the Rathores  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Her sweet and mellow laughter  
The gay rejoicings of youth  
Dissolved into torpor;  
The melodious music of her harp  
Scattered over surface;  
And pride appeared merging  
In dark clothes of mourner;  
As life flowed in the caverns of death  
In deep caves of gloom  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Her gladness eclipsed  
In the greyness of the dusk;  
Her mirth and rapture  
Sunk in the abyss of gloom;  
And a joyless horror  
Loomed over the horizons of the Thar;

As the dread-dread Auring  
 Roared thunderously  
 The tidal waves of ferocity  
 And let loose in bitter vengeance  
 The relentless rule of a tyrant  
 Under the heel of his army,  
 Its heartless shock  
 Rocked the body and the soul  
 Of the magnificent Maroo,  
 Its engine of destruction  
 Set ablaze the length and breadth of Maroo  
 And her beautiful environs;  
 Of blotted honour and hideous shape  
 Suspended upside down  
 She hung, undressed and nude  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Strange are the Divine Ways*

The Imperial army of Hindustan  
In raised hood, like a venomous cobra  
Emitting hisses and poison  
Spread over the sands of the Thar;  
The hawks were out of the falconry  
In rapacious greed  
To hunt and prey  
Over the sands of the Thar;  
The monstrous vultures, with powerful wings and claws  
Moved through air, in hate and malice  
Over every nook and crevice of the Thar  
Defiling her pristine purity  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The choking terror of Aurang  
The cruel strokes of fate  
Hitting fearfully  
Broke the back of Maroo;  
His wrathful demeanour  
Like the roaring of the tides  
Let loose the harrowing tales of woe  
And engulfed the very being of Maroo;  
His heavy hand  
Held her soul in a vise-like grip;  
Her honour defiled, her dignity destroyed  
She agonised with shame  
In sobs of pain  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo, robbed of her respect  
And thrust in the hollows of doom;



In the veil of the saddest sorrows  
 In the streaks of the thickest gloom:  
 Stood enchained in the motionless pits of stagnancy  
 In unending bemoan:  
 Still she awaited ! And awaited !  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

But there appeared on distant horizon  
 A faint glimmer of hope  
 A feeble gleam of light:  
 When in the early dawn  
 Far-off at Jamrud:  
 The two widows of Jaswant  
 Delivered posthumous sons:  
 The elder named Ajit  
 The other was Dalthambhan;  
 And *Sardars* in tight lips  
 In the concealed intensities of joy  
 Echoed silently in the air:  
 A boon ! A benison from God !  
 Its gay reverberations  
 Its jovial notes  
 Rippled in gentle raptures  
 Over the bosom of the Thar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The shadows of sombre  
 The wan and sickly days  
 Ebbd for a moment;  
 The widows of Jaswant  
 Cast-off the weedy mourning garments;  
 Customary ceremonies and *havan's* performed  
 Amid the roll of the drums;  
 Jaggery and gold distributed to the poor  
 Dried coconut and *ghee* flowed in the sacred rites  
 Its fragrance through the gales spread

Over the weary unrest of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang heard the news  
When encamped at Ajmer;  
Busy in the military operations  
Over the sands of the Thar;  
A cryptic smile flowed over his face  
A mysterious fear ruffled his forehead;  
And the scornful Aurang  
Burst out in anger :  
Oh ! Allah, the mightiest of the mighty  
Strange are thy paths  
Man proposes and thou disposes;  
Lo ! the serpents are born  
But who could foil  
The designs of the Emperor of Hindustan;  
He is God's shadow  
The vicar of God on earth;  
He is the king of kings  
The divine messenger of the Almighty;  
He is the venerable patriarch  
The executor of His will;  
The dreadful designs of the Emperor  
Nursed in secret;  
Will burst upon the unsuspecting foe;  
Guard thyself !  
Kill the limbless reptiles  
Before they hiss or frown  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Aurang in hot haste  
Like a relentless tracker  
Moved from Ajmer, towards Delhi;  
With guilt tossing to and fro  
In the recesses of his mind;

With sin seeping swiftly  
In the fibres of his brain:  
And the evil  
Fastened with nails  
Floated in the filaments of his nerves:  
And the mighty Emperor  
In hurried leaps  
Reached Delhi:  
To catch a prey  
To kill the progeny of Jaswant  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Durga's Historic Flight*

Lo ! commenced the historic voyage  
Of the *Sardars*  
The coterie of the departed Jaswant;  
Who carrying the widows and the infants  
Along with them  
Moved from Jamrud towards Delhi;  
As Aurang had issued the command  
To put the infants in his custody  
For trust and care  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The caravan reached Delhi  
The capital of the Mughal Empire;  
Where the infants kept under guarded custody  
In the castle of Nurgarh;  
Where Aurang announced himself to be the care-taker  
The keeper of Maroo's interests;  
In a boastful pride  
Aurang proclaimed :  
That Jaswant was a noble soul  
Who rendered great services  
In remote and rocky mountains  
To the cause of the Mughal Empire;  
Who could be a better custodian  
Of the infants of the deceased ?  
Who could console  
The soul of the departed  
Except the Emperor of Hindustan ?  
The all-powerful sovereign of the land  
The undisputed lord upon the earth;  
Whose word was command

One flicker of whose brow  
Could affect the destiny of millions  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The stars in the bright horizon went pale  
The visions of the *Sardars* began to crumble  
Their hopes and aspirations faded into nothing;  
As the heirs of Maroo  
Lay helpless into Aurang's clutches  
Locked up securely  
In the castle of Nurgarh;  
A wave of dread  
Amid enveloping shadows  
Loomed over their febrile mind;  
The paralysing fear  
Spread far and wide  
So quick and fast  
That their faces turned grim;  
Ah ! gripped in the dingy dens of evil  
Clenched in the sinful net of Aurang;  
Where trauma in its devilish darkness  
Grew from bad to worse;  
Ah ! confined in the dark cavernous cellars  
The valour of the *Sardars*  
Waned against the blasts of fate;  
Their chivalry  
Famous in history and legend, dissipated  
And they sank into fear and drudgery;  
Downcast in shame ! Beguiled !  
The *Sardars*  
Stared into each other's eye helplessly;  
Haunted by fear and abandoned by hope  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The Mughal Court became a hub of diplomacy  
Bargains and offers floated;

All proved futile  
Seemed falling apart;  
Thence in surly voice  
Aurang spoke in a pitch high :  
Let the infants grow in the castle of Nurgarh  
Under the shield of the Imperial power;  
Forget about their welfare  
Cast aside thy doubts;  
Take whatever you want  
Gold, silver or the pearls;  
And proceed in peace  
To the land of your birth  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In a moment of unnerving dark  
When all seemed lost, except the Hope;  
Lo ! amid the coterie of the *Sardars*  
There was a man  
With a rim of moustaches  
Bent into curly shape  
Waving over his upper lip  
In excitement and in hope;  
A glossy, sheeny beard  
Shimmering in the glimmer of trust  
And dancing in the bower of fidelity;  
A dark, broad, throbbing brow  
Glittering fearlessly  
In soul's powers lofty;  
And eyes, big and glowing  
Emitting sparks  
Courage and confidence  
And the beams of promise;  
With a sword unsheathed  
He moved forth, a few feet  
In steps unalarmed  
Like a fabled Greek warrior;

He was Durga, the lion-hearted  
 Who emerged on the scene  
 And took up the challenge;  
 Thence in a voice, unstartled and firm  
 And well guarded words  
 He prayed to the Emperor of Hindustan :  
 That the infants of the deceased  
 Are the heirs of Maroo !  
 Why entrust them  
 To *Badshah's* trust ?  
 The salt of Jaswant  
 Still flows full in our veins;  
 The memory of the lord  
 Is fresh in all of us;  
 Better ! We take care  
 Why bother the Emperor of Hindustan ?  
 We are capable enough  
 By the grace of the Almighty  
 To look after the infants  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A hidden streak of anger  
 Sharp and clear  
 Spread over the face of Aurang;  
 A veiled desire  
 Floating inside the autocrat  
 Surfaced suddenly;  
 The voracious hunger  
 In mottled appearance  
 Flowed from the greedy bowl of his inmost;  
 His attitude hardened  
 His wrath inflamed  
 And in a tone harsh  
 The foxy Aurang spoke :  
 Oh ! the *Sardars* of Maroo  
 Forget not !

That Maroo is firmly  
Under the hooves of my cavalry;  
Better late than never !  
And come to your senses;  
Or face the pitiless vengeance  
The unforgettable retribution  
That will grind you into dust  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

It was a slap across Maroo's face  
A blow to Durga's pride and patriotism;  
A warning coursed through his veins  
Alerting every fibre of his being;  
He glanced at the Emperor  
Whose eyes  
Blazing in deceptive brightness  
Conveyed something  
Which Durga at once understood :  
"Ah ! what a viper ?  
Never to be trusted and never forgotten;  
A velvety glove hiding  
A mailed fist of the most vicious kind  
Hoodwinking one and all;  
Ah ! what a dirty trick  
To put blinkers on our eyes";  
Exclaimed Durga, unto himself !  
In the Court of the Mughal Emperor  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga, having fallen  
In the evil clutches of Aurang;  
Gird up his loins  
To weave a plan secretly  
In collaboration with a trusted Chandawat *Sardar*  
And in the unrelieved gloom  
Two suckling kids exchanged for the two infant Princes



In the castle of Nurgarh.

With infants tied fast on his back  
Durga unsheathed his impatient blade  
Pressed forward like a storm;  
With eyes glowing like fire  
Fell on the Imperial guards at Nurgarh  
Like a demon of destruction.

The widows of Jaswant  
Threw off their female garments  
Put on the armour of a warrior;  
And along with Durga  
Swooped down upon the enemy  
So quick and fast  
Like a thunderbolt descending from the roaring clouds.

The Imperial guards in fury retaliated  
The lances drew blood, the swords struck flame  
The shields held aloft and helms unbraced  
And pennons streamed with gore;  
In the fatal tug of war  
Durga's thrilling battle cry  
Put heart into one and all :  
My steel-clad soldiers of Maroo  
Worry not of mortal life or the despicable foe  
Strike and move on !  
Fear not the jaws of death  
Or, the enemy designs and the guns;  
Stand firm !  
Maroo will fight to the bitter end.

The heroes before each deadly sweep  
Fell thick as ripened grain;  
And ere the darkening of the night  
There lay

## DURGA'S HISTORIC FLIGHT

The ghastly harvest of the fray;  
The corpses as milestones of Maroo's bravery  
Lay soaked in blood  
On the floors and parapet of the castle.

In vengeance the Mughals were at his heels  
But the brave Durga  
With towering strength made his way;  
And like a mammoth in savage rage  
Broke the barriers.

The valiant widows of Jaswant  
Badly wounded in the uneven battle  
With gaping wounds on their breasts  
Succumbed to the inevitable;  
Hurriedly Durga immersed their bodies  
In the holy waters of Jamuna;  
And with demoniac speed  
Galloped towards the sands of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fair Maroo ! the glittering sands of the Thar  
Thou art too far;  
With rocks and ravines in between  
Spreads a pathless screen;  
The dragon's teeth of the chasing enemy  
Shuts the horizon all around;  
With dismal thoughts lingering in his mind  
Durga in sheer desperation  
Continued the hard and strenuous flight;  
The infant Dalthambhan collapsed on the way  
Still the dauntless Durga  
Cutting and wiping the foe  
And skipping over the travails of misfortunes;  
Rushed in a headlong haste  
Along with infant Ajit

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

The last surviving legacy of Jaswant  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Few stories in legend and history  
In steadfast devotion and loyalty  
In courage and bravery  
In selflessness and patriotism equal  
The fearless flight of Durga  
From Nurgarh to Marwar;  
He reached Balunda, a village in Maroo;  
Ah ! what an awesome plight !  
Maroo burning in flames  
Panic everywhere  
Fear and terror  
Pervading Jaswant's domains  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah ! a terrible time  
Even heaven's darkened  
By heaps of corpses  
Precluding the sun;  
But the dauntless Durga  
For the safety of the infant Ajit  
Rushed in concealed identity  
To a remote village of Kalindari in Sirohi;  
And handed over the heir of Maroo  
For trust and care to a Brahmin lady  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In disguise, the Brahmin lady  
Free from selfish motives  
Nursed and nurtured the infant Ajit  
Showered the affection of a mother;  
And Durga's close associate, Kichi Mukhandas  
In the garb of a *Sadhu*  
Made his dwelling in a cave near by

## DURGA'S HISTORIC FLIGHT

To keep a watchful eye  
On Ajit, the lone sapling of hope  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

## *Marco in Flames*

With the death of Jarmen  
 Marco's defenses were destroyed  
 And coming like a sand storm  
 Enveloped it from all sides  
 In the sandy wastes of Marnar.

Durga's escape and flight  
 Was a ringing clap  
 Across the face of Aurang  
 Manifesting his immense power  
 It aroused Aurang's anger  
 Like the clashing of stormy seas;  
 And the power-drunk Emperor  
 Marched with his cohorts  
 To avenge his humiliation  
 In the sandy wastes of Marnar.

The battle drums boomed  
 Cannons belched fire  
 Roaring thunderously to avenge  
 Aurang's cowardly foibles  
 Spelt death and disaster  
 Over the howling sands of the Thar;  
 Marco became a vast graveyard  
 The *parach-ranga*, the fire-colored flag  
 Which carried her from glory to glory  
 Waving from the sand hills of Umarkota  
 To the salt lake of Sambar  
 Fell into oblivion  
 In the sandy wastes of Marnar.

## MAROO IN FLAMES

Maroo's fields laid waste  
The crops perished in flames  
The villages set ablaze;  
And farmers  
Terror-stricken and panicky  
Bewailed like orphans  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo's art and culture decayed  
The civic life shaken to roots  
And happiness was but an empty name;  
Her temples were destroyed  
The *Pujaris* in dread fled  
*Jaziya* imposed upon the Hindus  
And the mosques like mushrooms arose;  
Devastated from top to bottom  
Her fate hung in the balance  
And the kicks of Imperial fury went on unabated;  
Her freedom  
Like a heap of dead leaves  
Lay rotting everywhere  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo soaked in blood  
Her bones crunched  
And hung the skulls of countless dead;  
Her leaves scattered  
The twigs and branches crushed  
And trunk broken into pieces;  
Over her thorny wilderness  
Death and the scavenging vultures  
Swooped in the silence of day and night;  
As the brute in Aurang  
In grisly terror  
Unhampered growled, grinding his teeth  
To mock and murder the once powerful Thar

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo's hopes fell  
Like autumn leaves  
To be mingled with the dust of the Thar;  
Her dead, hanged on the gallows  
With hands raised towards the heaven  
Made the very air moan in agony;  
Her fledgelings  
With stabs on their breasts  
Tattered in their nests;  
As Aurang's venom  
Unabatedly flowed, in shapeless shadows  
Over the ghastly sadness of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In reverence, Maroo remembered  
The deceased Jaswant  
The saviour of her honour and splendour;  
Her fancies  
Flowed back  
In the bowl of the vanished years;  
When as a feathery nymph  
Like a lily-white;  
She shook her leg  
Frolicking in joyous abandon;  
With virgin step and bashful hand  
Like the blush of morning rose;  
And tread on enchanted ground  
In the gemmy bower of the Thar;  
When as a sweet blonde  
In doe-like eyes  
She played the game of youth  
In the moony glamour of the Thar;  
When her velvety mounds  
Lifted up and high

Could dream of milk within her body's breast;  
 But gone is the bliss  
 Gone is the blithe  
 The gay days of maiden glee and sport;  
 Like the dew on the sands  
 Like the foam of the river  
 Like the bubble on the fountain;  
 Leaving behind the footprints  
 Locked up in the secret of her breast;  
 On the brow of gloom  
 That swelled with the voices of the dead;  
 In pale moonlight  
 In sunken pulse and quaking limb  
 The eyeballs dim  
 And soul with harrowing anguish torn;  
 In the tortuous nights of pain  
 That hung like a goblin wild  
 On the sorrowing tomb of the Thar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Maroo ! Hail to her venerable soul !  
 Even limp and lame  
 And staggering in the ravines  
 Of bleak and cheerless gloom;  
 Her indomitable spirit to regain  
 Still hung about  
 In the blazing firmament of the Thar;  
 Its voice warning from the smoke-filled sky :  
 Wait ! Wait ! Oh, dear Wait !  
 Let thy will be lofty  
 At all hazards;  
 Over the bleeding agony of the Thar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Who says that history glides in straight line ?  
 For zig-zag are its paths;



Its brooks  
Beneath the heap of the dead  
Beneath the humus of the rotting  
Meander through unknown and uneven paths;  
Its streamlets  
Move in all directions  
Making strange patterns  
Confounding the wisest and the keenest intellect;  
Its currents are deep and shallow, fast and slow  
Like fate they rise and fall  
Elevating men to dizzy heights or grinding them into dust  
Its ways are unknown and unknowable;  
These lessons of history  
Had circulated in Maroo for long;  
She knew well  
One who can descend can also climb;  
Let the depth of fall  
Measure the height of her soul;  
In the searing winds of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Durga Accepted the Gauntlet*

With wolf at the door  
 And in abject penury  
 Durga accepted Aurang's gauntlet;  
 The rape of Maroo and slaughter of priests  
 Gathering of ravens and wolves to the feast  
 Poured iron into his soul;  
 Her cries of humiliation  
 Hurt the lion-hearted Durga deeply  
 And fed the flames of his wrath  
 In the innermost recesses of his being;  
 Her cruel lamentations  
 And horror-stricken screams of pain  
 Stirred his passions to fever pitch;  
 And like a worthy son  
 With sleep forsaking him  
 He set out of bed  
 In forlorn hope;  
 To checkmate Aurang's moves  
 To cut him to size  
 And to spike the guns of the Mughal Empire;  
 The noble Durga then vowed  
 Never to bend  
 And at no time to sue for peace or surrender;  
 But to be true to his mother's milk  
 In the deadly struggle of the Thar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's words of promise  
 To his master at his death bed  
 When recalled stirred his mind and body;  
 Pride in his clan and love for his country



And destiny gets stuck without endurance;  
 Forget not !  
 That humiliation is the prolific breeding ground  
 To sow the seeds of liberty;  
 Liberty is highly valued  
 It is the life-blood of civilization  
 The alpha and omega of progress;  
 But tortuous are its tracks  
 And hazardous are its paths;  
 Forget not !  
 That out of mud  
 Grows the lotus;  
 That out of the debris of defeat  
 Victory shall arise;  
 In exciting feelings of happiness  
 In tingling delights of glory;  
 Over the weary waste of the Thar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! the warrior Durga  
 Sounded the hunting-horn of battle  
 Its echoes lasted for three decades long  
 Over the deadly turmoil of the Thar;  
 And himself in unflinching loyalty  
 In unbending vigour  
 Put his heart and soul  
 In painful quest to win back freedom  
 Over the weary ways of the Thar;  
 With blades of Maroo unsheathed  
 For the defence of her liberty and freedom  
 The dauntless Durga  
 Pushed ahead boldly  
 Into lion's mouth  
 Into the thick of Aurang's deadly weapons;  
 The guns roared, the cannons thundered  
 The swords clanged, the shields shuddered;

Forward flung the heroes  
 In myriad waves  
 In vigorous dance;  
 Into the bath of blood  
 Into the pyre of flames;  
 And sailed in comfort and cheer  
 Towards the farthest shore;  
 The mortal horizons of the Thar  
 That mingle into immortal heaven;  
 That melodious abode of bliss  
 Ever measureless  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The gallant Durga  
 Struggling over the thorns and brambles of existence;  
 Fleeing from place to place  
 With no repose even in jungle calm  
 No pause in hermit caves  
 And no rest for days and nights long;  
 Riding ceaselessly on horse-back  
 Roasting a frugal barley-*bati*  
 In the burning sand of the Thar;  
 And picking it up  
 With the sharp point of his lance;  
 Galloping, tearing and slashing  
 The enemy, in unquenchable passion  
 That never grew dull;  
 And set on his legs  
 In unwavering devotion to a cause  
 The cause of Maroo's freedom  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang's marauding hordes  
 Pillaged and plundered  
 To enslave Maroo;  
 To subdue

And to extinguish the flame of freedom;  
 The matchless Durga, the refulgent ray  
 Dispelled the darkness  
 Brightened the horizons of the Thar;  
 As a pillar of hope by day  
 A column of fire by night;  
 That bestirred the heroes  
 And transformed despair into action;  
 The action of the brave  
 The exploits of the heroic  
 The legends of the glorious  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang one day commanded  
 His artist  
 To draw the portraits of Shivaji and Durga  
 The two dreaded foes of his regime;  
 Shivaji was drawn seated on a couch  
 And Durga on a horse-back, baking barley-cakes  
 In the blazing pyre of the Thar;  
 Aurang at the first glance  
 Laid bare his intentions :  
 One could catch Shivaji  
 But who could entrap Durga;  
 That foxy dog of the desert  
 That wolf in lamb's skin  
 Was bound to be his curse  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang was correct  
 For, with the lapse of time  
 His prophesy proved true  
 Over the sands of the Thar;  
 But by no means  
 His assessment of Durga  
 Stood in harmony with facts;

For the lion-hearted Durga  
The lion of Maroo  
Was an eyesore to Aurang ?  
The irresistible Durga  
Pure like a water lily  
Faithful like a horse  
And far-seeing like an eagle;  
Could find his way  
Despite insurmountable difficulties  
In spite of the gathering gloom  
Despite despair, hunger and frustration  
In spite of the overwhelming odds of Aurang's machinations;  
In search of the shores peaceful and calm  
Where freedom basks in sunshine  
Where people live manly lives  
Where human dignity is preserved  
Where rights are inviolable and duty sacred  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

## *Roared the Lion of Maroo*

A ferment simmering for long  
 Exploded with volcanic force  
 In a savage clash of arms  
 Like wild beasts, ran amuck  
 Over the turmoil of the Thar;  
 The plundering forays and pitched battles  
 The skirmishes and guerilla encounters  
 Evoked songs and music praising  
 The valour of Durga's sword;  
 Who in anger and vengeance  
 Continuously or with intervals  
 Poured forth  
 Over and over again  
 A unceasing shower of arrows  
 Over the outposts of Aurang in Maroo;  
 And hunted the Mughals  
 Day in and day out  
 Over the sands of the Thar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

But Aurang, the mighty Emperor  
 Firmly in saddle  
 With heels dug deep  
 Was a hard nut to crack;  
 Who could knock him off the perch ?  
 Who could move or remove Aurang ?  
 Who could unseat him from the throne of his ancestors ?  
 The doughty hero of many a battle  
 Of Dharmat and Samugarh  
 Of battles in the peninsula of the Deccan;  
 Invincible in power and resources





Became a devil's rendezvous;  
 Where Aurang the satan lifted a hand  
 And the heads of flowers fell;  
 Her lanes laid waste  
 And heavy was the tread of the tyrant;  
 Sunken faces shrivelled with fear  
 Lifeless yet not dead  
 Shapeless, distorted but still human;  
 As Aurang's dread  
 Spread like wild fire  
 Resolution hardened to fight the enemy  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! to Durga !  
 None could spoil his character  
 Or blight his will;  
 None could erode  
 The inner power of his soul;  
 The deadly blows of Aurang  
 The blasts of fate  
 The knocks of Time  
 Never could  
 Bring his Will to the ground;  
 For him  
 Agony was a constant mate;  
 And pleasures having discarded  
 Pain was a joy ignorant of itself;  
 And sorrows transfigured into ecstasy  
 In the gloom of the Thar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

End not yet !  
 Rubbed but not wiped out !  
 Blooded but not beaten !  
 Roared the lion of Maroo  
 Over the ruins of the Thar;



*Durga's New Weapons of Diplomacy*

Misfortune never rains but it pours  
 It poured heavily  
 And immersed Durga  
 Over head and ears;  
 Though short of wealth and wherewithal  
 The valiant but thrifty Durga  
 Never felt shaky and nerveless;  
 He pushed forward  
 Despite enormous odds  
 Out of the marshy quag;  
 To face the menacing moves of Aurang  
 Through diplomacy as the new weapon  
 Unleashed from his armoury  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga took shelter  
 Under the canopy of diplomacy  
 And devised a plot  
 Of enticing Prince Muhammed Muazzam  
 The second son of Aurang;  
 To him, he pleaded :  
 Oh ! gracious Prince !  
 The dauntless warrior of fame;  
 Thy royal looks  
 Leave none in doubt of thy courage  
 Thy qualities of head and heart  
 Shine like moon and the stars;  
 They presage  
 That thou alone art worthy  
 Of people's trust  
 In the land of Hindustan;

Cannot but presage thy future  
Which is resplendent and gorgeous;  
The glittering throne of Hindustan  
The fabled diamond  
Unlimited wealth and power  
Beckon thee !  
The legendary bird, *Huma*  
Beautiful in golden wings  
Cannot but cast its shadow on thee;  
The jewelled crown of Hindustan  
Most lustrous and powerful  
Sheathed in hoary traditions  
Incomparable, matchless and glorious  
Beckon thee !  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh ! gracious Prince !  
Scion of the family of Timur and Babar  
Forget not !  
That thy father is in trouble;  
Why wait ?  
Favourable is the time  
Open is the weather  
Let us act  
Now and now alone !  
Pay him in his coin  
As he paid to your grandfather Shahjahan;  
The valorous sons of Maroo  
Shall stand by thy side;  
Never part with thee  
And shall cleave to thee  
Through thick and thin;  
No betrayal !  
Take it for granted  
For betrayal is a hateful word  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The dreams of Mughal Empire  
The panoply of sovereignty  
And the pride of power;  
Rippled in hidden streaks of joy  
Over the forehead of Prince Akbar;  
And he cried aloud :  
Well put ! Well put, Durga !  
Possible it could be !  
By thy help  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Encouraged !  
Perhaps a point is gained !  
Uttered Durga in silence  
And continued further :  
Remember ! Oh, gracious Prince  
Maroo is humiliated  
Robbed of her repute  
Deprived of her glory  
Has scores to settle;  
Let the royal dignity be bestowed on thee  
Let the pearly crown decorate thy forehead;  
Then forget not ! Thy promise !  
To put Prince Ajit on the throne of Maroo  
And to restore Maroo's freedom and dignity  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! the crow of conceit  
Made its nest  
In the mind of Prince Akbar  
And uttered in agitation :  
Enough ! Enough ! Durga !  
The valorous Mughal blood  
The chivalrous blood of ages  
Flow in my viens;  
The splendid Mughal traditions

Of Babar and Akbar  
Are my heritage;  
Truth and steadfastness  
Upholding of dignity  
Are parts of my culture;  
Loose promises only the timid make  
Not the prospective Emperor of Hindustan;  
How can I stoop low  
In thy esteem ?  
Promise once given is resolute  
Unshaken I stand;  
Let me be master of Hindustan  
And Maroo shall go to Prince Ajit;  
For in my eyes  
He is the heir  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So said ! The Prince sailed towards the storms  
Of horrendous dimensions;  
And Durga in a joyous mood  
Gave expression to his happiness;  
Gathered around Prince Akbar  
A band of devoted soldiers  
In Nadole, a village on the fringe of Maroo;  
And amid the beating of the drums  
Proclaimed boldly !  
That from now onwards  
Prince Akbar is the Emperor of Hindustan  
Except the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Durga-Akbar Revolt*

Lo ! the lion of Maroo  
In flaming anger  
Roused to retaliate  
Over grievous injury;  
And roared in voice deep  
From Nadole  
Over the hills of Aravali;  
Reverberating echoes rolled  
Like mimic notes that dwell  
In hollow rock and sounding dell;  
The ominous tidings of revolt  
Fell on the ears of Aurang  
When encamped at Ajmer  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In hope and in fury  
To carry out and to fulfil  
Dreams of Prince Akbar and Durga  
Their combined forces marched;  
To snatch the *Taj* of Hindustan  
The legendary prize of their heart;  
The enchanting houri  
Beautiful, lovely and fabulous;  
Beckoning with her irresistible charm  
Which not many could ignore  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Revolt ! Revolt !  
Nothing but a heinous revolt !  
A treacherous game, a deceitful trick !  
Cried Aurang in disgust;



And excited to anger  
 Uttered :  
 The wild jackals, in timid combination  
 With hostile intentions  
 And in gregarious hunger;  
 Are moving impulsively  
 To lay waste the splendour of the Empire  
 Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

With beaded knees and half-open palms  
 Aurang knelt before the Almighty;  
 Give me courage ! Oh, Allah !  
 The divine reservoir of trust;  
 To tide over the crisis  
 To hit and deal a mortal blow  
 And to quell and put down;  
 The timid jackals  
 Pushing ahead in violent anger  
 Over the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A tough and vigorous warrior  
 A resourceful ruler  
 Aurang never  
 Did shrink from risky paths;  
 A strong and powerful fighter  
 An unyielding *Badshah*  
 With uncanny, mysterious power  
 Never did he hesitate  
 To plunge into troubled waters;  
 An adventurous man  
 Full of vigour and force  
 Life for him  
 Was a quest, an adventure for the Holy cause;  
 Many shocking times  
 The ups and downs  
 He had seen

Over dark caves and groovy hollows;  
 Always without pause, off the reel  
 The existence, to him  
 Meant a struggle;  
 Over the fastnesses of the Deccan  
 Over the fissures of the Thar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Make haste ! Look sharp !  
 Take thy position ! Oh, Aurang !  
 A call echoed in his ears;  
 And the mighty Emperor  
 Pushed forward  
 To smash and split  
 The Durga-Akbar combine;  
 Enraged yet cool  
 Alamgir led the Imperial forces  
 In massive formations towards Ajmer;  
 To teach the infidels a lesson  
 That defiance meant death, destruction and doom  
 Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Treachery is a crafty art  
 The contrivance  
 Of the skilful, cunning brains;  
 That is looked upon  
 As immoral in a world of ethics;  
 But once the survival is in peril  
 Deceit becomes an artful tool  
 A weapon of immense importance  
 To drive a wedge  
 And to quash the rivals;  
 The canny Aurang  
 An acute and subtle Emperor  
 Knew well the canons of clever diplomacy;  
 Lo ! through allurements

He won over Khan Tabawwar, the General of Prince Akbar  
A night before the day of attack  
When the Prince after royal revelry  
Lay slept in deep snoring  
Inside his tent  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In the shadowy gloom  
Dark like the socket of a skeleton's eye  
Spread the news  
That Khan Tabawwar had betrayed:  
And Durga  
In a soldier's flight  
Reached rapidly  
To the camp of Prince Akbar  
To ascertain the truth:  
The guards on duty  
Proclaimed him  
As the Prince was in bed  
Lost in a dreaming sleep  
A wavering hesitation  
Settled comfortably in Durga's brain  
Perhaps the motives of Prince Akbar  
Could be wicked  
An evil game  
A vicious trap  
Could be in the offing  
To rack and ruin Mirce's salvation forces  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah! what a dreary dawn?  
A melancholy sunrise  
Appeared on the sandy horizon  
Amid the sandy wastes  
Where who order who resembled  
That Khan Tabawwar had deserted!

Aghast and panicky  
 The visions of Prince Akbar  
 His grandiose schemes  
 Perished in the seething cauldron of the Thar;  
 Trembling like a leaf  
 The shirtless Prince  
 Shiveringly ran for protection  
 To escape from the wrath of his father;  
 And flung himself  
 For life and shelter  
 Deep in Durga's camp  
 Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The pitiful Prince Akbar  
 In dreadful disarray  
 Wrecked by tears and sobs  
 Disclosed the entire plot to Durga  
 And pleaded his innocence;  
 The magnanimous Durga  
 Gave him the shelter;  
 And repented  
 Over the opportunity lost  
 The moment slipped  
 To measure the sword with Aurang  
 Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Outwitted and outmanoeuvred  
 Durga-Akbar revolt  
 Destroyed by deceit  
 Shattered into powder  
 Died before it took off;  
 And Durga  
 With sword in the scabbard  
 Lamented over the fate  
 Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fortune gone ! chance lost !  
Durga-Akbar plot torn to shreds  
Failed ignominiously;  
The foxy Aurang  
Put Durga to shade;  
Whose diplomacy faltered  
But how could it fail ?  
How could he be  
At the end of his tether ?  
He gave a stunning sunset call on bugle  
Retreated towards Jalore  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Durga Flung the Mughal Gold*

With untiring vigour  
And mounting rage  
Aurang followed Durga;  
The grand Mughal army  
Let loose a reign of terror  
And weighed down  
Upon the sands of the Thar;  
To punish Durga  
And to take Prince Akbar as a captive;  
A dismal gloom  
A torturing sullenness  
Enveloped the horizons of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Unshaken ! Firm !  
Durga endured every pain;  
Nothing could break him  
Or shake his courage  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Freedom is graceful  
If one knows to cultivate it;  
Freedom is a blessing  
That does not descend to a people  
A people have to raise themselves to it;  
Freedom is like a boat on high seas  
It becomes rudderless  
When there are too many to direct and too few to follow;  
Freedom is a voyage through storms  
It becomes wayward  
When the sailors become complacent;

Freedom is a caravan of endurance  
It is doomed to ruin  
When the character of the leader is spotty;  
Durga was aware  
How to sow and cultivate  
The seeds of freedom;  
Against the outrageous shafts of fate  
The unceasing blows of tyranny  
That prevailed  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Durga blew the trumpet again  
The call of freedom  
Its vibrations floated over the sands of the Thar :  
Freedom lies in faith  
It is the miracle from within;  
Faith in freedom is the foundation of freedom  
As is thy faith  
So would be thy creation;  
Awake ! the heroes of Maroo !  
Bow not to the evil;  
Let thy will be steely  
Let thy soul be tough;  
That is the surest path  
To gain freedom  
Against the might of Aurang  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Through Durga's clarion call  
In awakened zeal, new determination surfaced;  
Dismay disappeared  
A new resolution seized the Thar;  
The heroes roused  
From enervation and ennui  
And the guerilla skirmishes began  
Pestering the Mughals

Ransacking their garrisons  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang's reputation was at stake  
The fame began to falter  
And he showed signs of wavering;  
Durga's ceaseless resistance  
Was telling on his nerves  
And proving damaging to the Imperial interests;  
Lo ! the skilful Aurang  
Took recourse to overtures fresh  
To hinder Durga's will  
And to take the wind out of his sails;  
Infallible weapons of diplomacy  
The crooked tools of cunning  
Began to be employed with increasing frequency;  
A basket full of gold  
Eight thousand guineas of gold;  
Dazzling, glittering and tempting gold  
Shining with bright quivering light  
Sparkling, luminescent, enticing gold;  
Offered to Durga by Aurang  
Of course with a condition attached !  
To hand over Prince Muhammed Akbar  
A pagan in the garb of a muslim  
A treacherous infidel  
A traitor to the Holy scriptures  
Residing in the camp of Durga  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga, the noblest soul  
Exclaimed in lofty voice :  
A shameless trickery  
An infamous gimmickry  
These inducements are futile  
Allurements are of no avail;



Gold is grief  
 The offspring of darkness  
 It is the ashes of a man's soul  
 He who offers it, offers pain;  
 Gold is venom  
 A nameless serpent in the bed  
 Biting one and all at will  
 Underneath a beguiling mask;  
 Gold is sordid desire  
 Vulgarising both the giver and the taker  
 He who accepts it  
 Sells his body and the soul;  
 Gold is bondage  
 The slavery at its worst  
 Soulful feelings and noble sentiments  
 Are sidelined by filthy lucre;  
 Gold is greed  
 It is the devil within us  
 Never satiated, always ready  
 To destroy the good in us;  
 Forget not !  
 The character is above gold  
 It is the seed-bed of my creed  
 The anchor of my ship  
 In the dreary ocean of the Thar;  
 Once that is blown up  
 What is there left behind  
 In the caravan of my life;  
 Forget not !  
 That Prince Akbar is the guest of Maroo  
 He is no refugee but a comrade;  
 His dignity is our dignity  
 The pride of the race;  
 Let it be clear to Aurang  
 That gold is not freedom;  
 Liberty is more precious

## DURGA FLUNG THE MUGHAL GOLD

Freedom is more sacrosanct  
Than a basket full of gold;  
A soul bathing in the fountain of freedom  
In the perennial streams of liberty  
Has greater meaning and purpose  
Than basking in the sunshine of Imperial gold;  
A frugal bread, a coarse barley *bati*  
Baked in the fires of the Thar  
Over the gentle breeze of freedom  
Is enough !  
So said ! Durga flung the Mughal gold  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.



Invested with unfading honour of patriotism  
Of her boundless role  
Of her blameless and spotless struggle  
In the fight for freedom  
Against the Emperors of Hindustan;  
The steely souls of Mewar  
In a halo of glory  
Beckoned in glamour  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Teeming with shiny gems of glory  
Famed for all time;  
Beaming in ageless grace  
Of the stirring tales of *johur*  
Of the immortal deeds of Bappa Rawal, Kumbha and Hamir  
Of Padmini, Sanga and Pratap;  
The glorious state of Mewar  
Evergreen in matchless renown;  
Smiled with gay abandon  
And danced in saltant joy  
In the deathless legends of yore  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Her immaculate role in history  
Throbbing with bravery  
And pulsating with the sacred blood of sacrifices;  
Earned for her Maharana's  
The deserved title of *Hindua-Suraj*  
The sun of the Hindus;  
Her *gadi* then shone  
With the radiance of Maharana Raj Singh;  
To whom Durga in reverence bowed  
In accordance with Court etiquette  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Known far and wide for his struggle



From the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Then in a low voice  
Durga spoke :  
Maroo is a waste land  
In the grip of gloom  
Where death knells sound increasingly;  
She is battered in mind and soul  
Because of the unequal struggle against the Moghuls  
And tottering to her doom;  
Her branches and twigs cut-away  
Head nearly chopped-off  
And the trunk hangs limply over the dark of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So said ! Durga stopped !  
And then continued :  
With Maroo so badly  
Her struggle is in a condition of collapse;  
How to take sword against the might of Aurang ?  
How to continue the battle for freedom ?  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maharana Raj Singh  
Understood the puzzle in Durga's mind  
And then the valorous *Sisodia* spoke :  
The cause of Maroo  
The honour of the liberation forces  
Mewar could never let down;  
She could face the anger of Aurang  
Never could she permit  
The choking gloom  
To extend its shadows, over the sands of the Thar;  
She could stand Aurang's wrath  
Never could she witness  
The sunset and its lengthening shadows

Darkening for ever  
 Over the wastes of the Thar:  
 She could enure against Aurang  
 But how could she ever  
 "Elate" an honour destroyed  
 And radiant Maroo vanquished  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So uttered ' Maharana Faj Singh  
 Paid handsome bounty to Durga:  
 Boasted his morale  
 With an affectionate pat on his back:  
 And blessed him to sail ahead  
 Deep in treacherous waters  
 In quest of freedom's shores  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Durga Resolved to go to Deccan*

A thought sprang in Durga's mind  
Perhaps Prince Akbar  
A traitor in Aurang's eye  
Could be the cause of Maroo's agony  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fling Prince Akbar !  
Hand him over to Aurang !  
And let Maroo breathe in peace !  
This idea  
In fits and starts  
Floated in unsound shape  
In Durga's fevered imagination;  
But a sense of remorse overtook him  
And Durga adhered  
To the dictates of conscience :  
Ridiculous it would be  
To throw a comrade  
To the hungry wolves  
And help Aurang feel triumphant  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Then arose another notion  
The idea to go to Deccan;  
It seized Durga tight  
As days rolled by  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's resolve to go to Deccan  
Was a sign  
Not of weakness but of diplomacy;



Bravery, in the absence of diplomacy  
Is like learning in the dark;  
It is groping in wilderness  
A blind-man's-buff game  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

No great warrior  
Ever separated strategy from bravery;  
Bravery is there  
Kept away from strategy  
It is aimless fight in the oblivion;  
A shiftless wandering  
Like a bird attempting to fly through tornured wings;  
Lo ! Durga then resolved  
To go to the distant Deccan  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Clear were the motives:  
To Durga;  
For Marwar was in bad need of pause  
Dire was the want for respite;  
To free herself from the wild weasls of woe  
And to apply balm to her wounds  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Carry Prince Akbar  
Take him along with thee !  
Far-off from Marwar  
Towards the rocky land of the Deccan;  
That would be a strategy fine  
To diminish Aurang's anger against Marwar  
To divert his attention towards Deccan;  
Where entangled he would be  
In the perplexing net of the Marathas;  
And peace would appear briefly  
On the sands of the Thar

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

But a riddle still haunted !  
 Who could carry on the fight against Aurang ?  
 Who could keep the battle for freedom going ?  
 None, but the brave Champavat Sonag  
 Bold, vigorous and robust;  
 A rare among the rarest  
 Who could grow in the open  
 Like the bole of a desert tree;  
 A dare-devil  
 Never could he yield  
 To the quirks of fate;  
 A leonine man  
 Savage in strength  
 Ferocious in the power of striking;  
 And signs of loyalty  
 In uncommon measure  
 Flowed full in his veins;  
 Lo ! Durga's choice fell on Sonag  
 Invested him with powers  
 And installed him, successor;  
 Placed at his disposal  
 The fabulous bounty  
 Collected from Mewar;  
 And in the name of divinity  
 Blessed him  
 To carry on the struggle  
 In the blazing sands of the Thar;  
 And rest not  
 Till the goal was achieved  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So done ! Durga in great agitation  
 Moved towards the distant South :  
 Hail ! Oh, destiny ! Hail ! Oh, fate !

Unknown to the way  
And unknown to the reason;  
They are always in motion  
Never enjoying actual bliss;  
Tossed in the angry sea  
The destiny  
Takes me down to the bottom South  
Remote from the noisy waters of the war.

I am like a girl  
Blowing over the sand dunes  
And ignoring their existence;  
They do not move my path  
Through ridges and boulders  
Remote from the noisy waters of the war.

I am like a pilgrim, in foolish hope  
Unhindered I move;  
Over the rocky and curved path  
Over slippery ways  
And over the tangled masses of time;  
In search of  
Landed on my own freedom  
Remote from the noisy waters of the war.

I am like the wave of life  
Unimpeded by the presence of pain;  
Through rocky oceans I pass  
Defying fate and time  
Toward the shores of the sea;  
Where in its indifference  
Freedom thrives in perpetuity;  
Where man's paradise is not about himself  
And can move in size  
Remote from the noisy waters of the war.

Lo ! out of anchorage, is my ship  
In yonder broad seas;  
I sail towards the gloomy tides  
The dull swell of the waves  
And the anger of the stinging breakers;  
In quest of mission's fulfilment  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Sail forth into the sea, Oh ship !  
Sail through the wind and wave, right onward steer !  
Sail without signs of doubt or fear  
Sail with determination, with all the hopes  
Towards the pilgrimage, where freedom beckons  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fear not, Oh ship ! the sudden assaults  
Fear not the tempests' roar  
Fear not the shallows and rocky reef;  
Sail on ! Sail on !  
And mind the storms and the wind  
Towards the South;  
From where the bugles of freedom  
In pleasant, sonorous sound  
Shall echo in joyous chorus  
Over the weary waste of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Farewell ! Farewell ! the land of my birth  
Farewell ! my motherland, the sands of the Thar  
Farewell ! the beloved darling of my heart  
The dear damsel of my dreams;  
So thought ! tears rolled !  
And Durga's caravan towards Deccan marched.

In fumes of anger  
In vengeful dread

The Mughals chased in swarms like angry bees;  
 To capture Durga  
 — a demon in the dreams of Aurang  
 — a malignant sore in the path of his glory  
 — a Hindu heathen defying the saviour of Islam  
 — a desert fox pretending to be the lion of Hindustan;  
 But who could !  
 Nab a roaring lion in the thick of the jungle !  
 Or hush up  
 A tempest growling at the peak of its fury !  
 Unmindful of dangers and designs  
 Durga thrust forward  
 Firmly and resolutely  
 And crossed the river Narbada  
 Deep, swollen and in spate;  
 And reached the destination  
 The far-off Deccan  
 Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Shambhaji Gave Shelter to Durga*

The Deccan's history  
After the collapse of Bahamani Kingdom  
Moved in haste;  
Wars and wrangles ensued  
Out of its ruins, five kingdoms appeared.

Two were faint and sickly  
Were knocked down like mushroom;  
One that survived  
Was crippled by Akbar, the Great  
The other annihilated by Shahjahan;  
Only the third, the nascent state of Shivaji  
Was a rising factor in Deccan politics.

Phenomenal was the rise of the Marathas  
The outburst of their latent energy  
Bewildered the Mughal sovereigns of Hindustan;  
Shivaji, a great warrior and statesman  
Of indomitable courage and chivalry  
Was the greatest Hindu, ever produced;  
Through deeds brave  
Carved out a formidable Maratha Kingdom  
In the rocky land of the Deccan.

Shambhaji, the illustrious son of Shivaji  
Adorned the throne of Maratha Kingdom  
When Durga and Prince Akbar  
Having completed the historic flight  
Reached the citadel of Maratha power  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Shambhall, the pride of the Marathas  
Following Great Shivaji's glorious traditions  
Overflowed with joy  
When Veer Durga, a renowned hero  
Appeared in his Court  
In the rocky land of the Deccan.

Shambhall laid open the innermost core of his heart  
With affection, fondness and appreciation;  
And clasped Durga tightly to his bosom  
A warm, symbolic union  
Indicative of deep comradeship of the two Hindu leaders  
Struggling against the tyranny of Aurang  
In the distant parts of Hindostan.

Standing close to Durga  
Was Prince Akbar  
And Shambhall's eye fell upon him;  
Stricken violently  
An unpleasant emotion ran over his face  
An alarm bell rang a warning received;  
His hands went numb with weakness  
His heart missed a beat or two  
His appearance turned grey  
A tremor jerked apart  
And fear seized the fibres of his mind;  
Confronted with fear and suspicion  
In flight not standing close  
Entered Shambhall:  
Who could have Prince Akbar  
A traitor in his house?  
Who could dare to cross the threshold  
Of the most powerful Emperor of Hindostan?  
For Aurang's great might  
Could spread deep fear  
In the domain of the Marathas

In the tableland of Deccan;  
Who could face Aurang  
The pitiless warrior  
The ruthless ruler  
None could challenge the mighty Moghul  
And yet live to see his kingdom intact  
In the rocky clefts of the Deccan.

Fanatically resolved to extend his Empire  
To unfurl the flag of Islam;  
For Aurang knew despite setbacks  
With bare hand he could rip into pieces  
The Maratha state in the Deccan;  
So thought ! Shambhaji shrinked  
No shelter ! To Prince Akbar  
He said.

Veer Durga pathetically  
Pleaded for Prince Akbar  
The only comrade of his life  
A lonely crony in the wide world  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Suddenly in this decisive moment  
A poet-courtier Kalash  
For whom Shambhaji had admiration and affection  
Intervened !  
Unfolded the glory of the Marathas  
The rippling streams of courtesy  
That flowed in the glorious vistas of their history;  
Of shelter to a reckless life  
Who, lingering like an unliked fugitive  
Reeling over rock to rock  
Travelling after fortune  
Against the wrath of his father  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.



Knowing well the outcome  
 The valorous Maratha picked up courage  
 To face the anger of Aurangz  
 Then to humiliate further Prince Akber  
 A comrade of Durga  
 Begging for shelter  
 In front of the chivalrous son of Shivaji.

The shelter was granted  
 Then showed in great profusion  
 Civility and politeness  
 In the great land of the Marathas  
 Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*The News of Shelter Reached Aurang*

The news spread wildly  
 Fell on Aurang's ears  
 When in camp at Ajmer  
 Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The dogged Aurang  
 Faltered for a while;  
 For he knew well  
 The rugged terrain of the Deccan;  
 And the importance of the Maratha power  
 Having being firmly in the saddle for long.

Aurang feared those shadows most  
 Which originated from his feet;  
 A treacherous son could be as dangerous as a rogue elephant  
 A self-motivated rascal could even take a dip in the sea;  
 Prince Akbar could foment a rebellion in the South  
 As he did in Maroo;  
 So thought Aurang.

Made of different metal  
 Obstinate and stubborn Aurang  
 Could never beat a retreat;  
 If valour failed, crafty diplomacy was at his command  
 If reason failed, the beasts of brutality could be let loose;  
 To capture the traitorous son  
 Who had taken shelter  
 In the plateau of Deccan  
 Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Beaten thoroughly to pulp

And ransacked to the full  
 Maroo, thought Aurang  
 Would take generations to rise;  
 Torn by tempered steel  
 Plagued by dogs of war  
 A thorny wilderness prevailed in Maroo  
 In the gloomy tent of despair;  
 Agony stared from each face  
 Anguish was lit large on it  
 The future was as much traumatic  
 As the past was painful;  
 Her strength ebbed away  
 And like a lifeless skeleton  
 Just waited for her doom  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Beware of the evil fate !  
 The Emperor of Hindustan  
 Never did he know  
 That Sher Shah, the Afghan Emperor of Delhi  
 Had nearly lost his Empire for a handful of *hajira*  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Beware of the cruel fate !  
 The mighty Aurang  
 Never did he know  
 That wounded, thirsty and fallen heroes  
 Could spring to life like Phoenix from the ashes  
 And turn history upside down  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Take heed the uncertain fate !  
 The great *Badshah* of Hindustan  
 Never did he know  
 That the rattling of his arms  
 Was music to the people of the Thar

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! the Emperor Aurang  
In a rage to retaliate  
Handed over the charge of Maroo  
To his son and the Commanders;  
Himself in mad, insane haste  
In grim determination  
Embarked on an adventure fresh  
Towards the distant Deccan;  
To cut and reduce the Marathas to size  
To shut them out from the joy of heaven  
To bring Prince Akbar as a captive  
And to demolish whoever stood in his way.

Maroo now became secondary  
In his strategy;  
The primacy shifted  
To the South  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's diplomacy bore its fruit  
Aurang was outwitted;  
His shifting of the pawns on the board  
Compelled the tormentor of Maroo  
The mighty Aurang  
To plunge in a headlong rush  
To the distant South.

Lo ! like an avalanche in all its fury  
The grand Mughal army dashed towards the South  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*The Wrath of Aurang Fell Upon Deccan*

The earth shook and trembled  
As the mighty Mughal arms  
In rage rolled down  
Like the thunder  
Over its agonised soul.

The guns and swords of the Mughals  
Like king cobra in frenzy  
Rose and spread its hood  
To wreck the Marathas  
And to plant death in Deccan's womb.

Cried Shambhaji !  
The ravaging storm descending from the sky  
A frightful fire-breathing monster  
A death-dealing dragon  
Swept across  
Pillaging, plundering  
To wreak vengeance  
Over the proud land of the Marathas.

A fire-belching dragon  
Marched ahead scorching  
Waked to ambition with a quiver  
Burning whatever stood in its way  
Its wings in frightened flit  
To destroy Prince Akbar's shelter  
The abode of the Marathas.

In righteous anger the brave Maratha  
Roused like a giant innocent of its strength

Like the death struggle of a whale  
Vowed to defend their hard-won kingdom;  
Up in arms they rose to a man  
Against the onslaught of Aurang.

Each cruel bitter shriek of bullet  
That tore the Marathas like a blast;  
Each wound on the breast of Deccan  
Roused the Marathas to a fever pitch.

A disastrous warfare  
To uproot the Marathas  
Let loose by indefatigable Aurang  
With the sole aim  
To reclaim his rebellious son to allegiance.

The Deccan was laid waste  
Bleak and barren;  
Horrible night and accursed days  
Loomed over the horizon of the South.

Marches on marches of the vast Mughal army  
The foraging ventures of their horsemen  
The evil deeds of their freebooters  
The huge Mughal cortege  
The Imperial army advanced like a band of dacoits  
Leaving dry and desolate  
The land of the Marathas.

Deccan was soaked in blood  
Its peaceful pursuits of life paled;  
Gaiety and happiness disappeared  
Awful calamities descended;  
People were enslaved  
In clutches of bondage they cried;  
But relentlessly continued

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

The search for Durga and Akbar  
By the Emperor of Hindustan  
The untiring Aurang.

Trees uprooted, crops burnt  
Huts reduced to smithereens;  
Death and pestilence prowled  
In heaps stood  
The bones of men and beasts;  
Under vicious onslaught of the Mughal arms  
Over the rugged rocks of the Deccan.

The frivolous search for Durga and Akbar  
Compelled Aurang  
To weaken the Empire of Hindustan;  
His wealth was wasted  
The treasury vaults became empty  
The sinews of the Empire grew feeble;  
Ah ! entangled in the web of the Marathas  
The Emperor with all his might and main  
Found himself utterly helpless;  
The Maratha came into his own and proved  
Its never exhaustible spirals and needles  
More dangerous than the Rathores of Maroo;  
But the resolute Aurang ! the sturdy Emperor !  
How could he withdraw ?  
How could he let down the glory of his House ?  
Lo ! Aurang devoted the maturest period of his life  
In the ruins of the South  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Shambhaji was executed  
Gone was the great Maratha King;  
A dark tragedy loomed  
But who could break the Maratha will ?  
Unbroken and in tireless energy

In awakened anger, they rose  
To carry ahead the struggle for freedom  
Against the oppressor of their land  
In the mountainous expanse of the Deccan.

A prolonged war continued  
Pitiless pursuit of war  
By Aurang  
Put an end to his lustre  
And the cracks and hollows  
Appeared inside the great Mughal Empire of Hindustan.

The hard and unbending sword of Aurang  
Failed to cow down the Marathas;  
Now stole in his mind  
A gloomy failure;  
In gloom, he shouted :  
Oh ! vulturous Durga  
What a foul game, thou had played ?  
Never did my valour and diplomacy fail  
As it was frittering in the South;  
Ah ! what a gloomy failure  
It was in the sands of the Thar  
More gloomy it had become  
In the rough land of the Deccan !

So said ! Aurang lamented !  
Futile are the sorrows of life  
Once the Time slides;  
Vain are the doleful lamentations  
The pangs of pain  
Once the Time flies;  
Fortune tumbles, empires fall  
The sharpest sword is rusted  
The strongest cord gets snapped  
The nerve and muscle get frayed



VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

With the passage of Time;  
It is Time  
That wrinkles the brows, and grey the scalp;  
It marches mercilessly  
It walks alone;  
Exhausted and infirm Aurang saw the moving finger  
Write 'finis' to his misadventure in the South  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Durga's Premonition*

In the pyre of the Deccan  
Far-off from Maroo;  
In trying and exacting moments  
In the soul-shattering conditions;  
Visions often dawn suddenly  
As did in Durga's view  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Pricked with Aurang's lance  
Maroo's honour peeled-off  
The plumage torn  
And freedom cut into shreds;  
Knocked-off the perch  
Shuddering in the helpless state  
Her bowl of pride and glory  
Broke into pieces;  
Such phantoms and sad reflections  
Often assailed, Durga's senses  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The dreadful dreams of havoc  
Of ruin and pillage  
Of awesome dread and woe;  
Stretching their streaks of gloom  
Over the embers of Maroo;  
Gripped Durga, all along  
In the ravines of the Deccan.

Lo ! one night in the thick of darkness  
In the midst of dismal gloom;  
A dreary and cavernous shadow

Broke suddenly into sight  
And gleamed in Durga.

He heard the jackals cry  
And the owls hoot;  
The distant bark of a dog  
And now and again a horse's tramp;  
The roofs of desert huts trembled  
As the blasts in velocity lashed;  
The thirsty thistles  
Amid the pealing of the storms  
In sadness glance;  
In the grim night of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

He saw death-like, fleshless limbs  
Shaking down like forest leaves;  
The trembling skeletons in fetter  
With shackled feet and hands;  
The bones of the dead  
In the ravages of the Thar  
Glancing from the abyss;  
As the storms groaned and growled  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

He saw in Maroo a captive soul  
Gripped in the whirlpool of pain;  
Moaning in endless wail  
And face shrivelled into wrinkles;  
In the legend of the shroud  
In the tissues of the loom;  
Where the temple of freedom  
Is shapeless mass of wreck and rubbish  
Stretch its bleeding hands  
And glare over cinders and ashes;  
Where phantoms on its errands glide

## DURGA'S PREMONITION

In the shivering of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

He saw through the lumber and the debris  
The haggard shape of a battle;  
Haunting the pallid sands  
Like an offensive ghost;  
He saw Sonag's black and quivering beard  
Staring at him;  
Amid the frenzy of the fight  
That flared in Maroo;  
Where locked up and flanked by the enemy  
Sonag blazed into anger;  
And roaring like a lion, spread out at full length  
Downright on the ground  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

He saw a tear burst on his lids  
It fell upon the wilderness of the Thar;  
Horror-stricken and astounded  
In the misty obscurity of sleep;  
He jumped  
In the mad rage of fury;  
Put his hand on sword  
And leaped to Sonag's help  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Sonag ! Sonag ! he cried  
And his eyes opened wide;  
In the wild of the Deccan  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Have I dreamed ? or was it real !  
No, it could not be true !  
Dreams are deceptive like the mirages  
The creation of a disordered fancy

VIBEK DURGADAS RATHORE

The unreal lingerings of the sub-conscious.  
And then arose a second thought  
In the anguished mind;  
Unreal shadows of dread could be an omen.  
Even a foreshadow, a prescience.  
Lo ! this premonition haunted Durga  
In the unrest of the Deccan.  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

## *Thus Fell the Brave Champavat Sonag*

The Emperor Aurang's departure from Maroo  
Towards the Deccan  
Was a signal to the liberation forces  
To intensify their striking power  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Champavat Sonag carried the sword  
And the flame into every quarter;  
Agra and Delhi trembled at his dread  
For he looked upon the Mughal power  
As the waning moon  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Champavat Sonag led the way  
In hot and glowing passion  
In impassioned zeal;  
Swept over Merta  
Destroyed the Mughal strongholds  
Hunted them like partridge on the sands  
And laid a ring round the fort of Jodhpur;  
The heart of power  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Prince Muhammed Azam, the son of Emperor Aurang  
Taking care of the Imperial operations from Ajmer  
In terrific fear and frightened dismay  
Directed his Commander to sue for peace  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Vain could be the policy  
To prolong an unfruitful and barren war



## THUS FELL THE BRAVE CHAMPAVAT SONAG

Like rugged mass of stones  
Let loose from a mountain high  
Knocked down in the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Sturdy and fiery of body  
The brave Champavat Sonag  
Never did he know to draw back or flinch;  
Plunged straight into the thick of battle  
Like a bird of prey;  
Swooped down upon the enemy  
Like thunder bolt  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Garments stained with saffron  
Lances with crimson;  
And in a tremendous charge  
Champavat Sonag pierced through the teeming battle lines  
Scattered the enemy like leaves before the blast;  
With a blood-curdling battle cry  
In a loud crash  
Break through violently  
Like an elephant crashing through the jungle  
And forced his way on to Aatakad Khan;  
In reckless rage  
Leaped with a sword to cut him  
But before he could accomplish his task;  
Ah! the merciless fate, he cried  
For instantaneously from behind  
A deadly blow cut-off Sonag's head;  
Oh! intense was the grief  
When his gallant voice was stilled  
And still more when his head had fallen;  
Spread a deathly shadow  
Like the hurricane eclipse  
Of the sun  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.



VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

The colossal Sonag  
In quivering lips and humid eyes  
Threw wild hands towards the sky  
Tumbled into the yellow sands  
And the blazing *Panch-ranga* fell into pale  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

'Durga' ! the last word he uttered  
Not in agony but in reverence  
Not a sigh but a departing message  
To the people of Maroo, to wage the battle of freedom !  
"This day is not the end of my life  
It is the beginning of my happiness  
And the completion of my glory  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar."

Foxes have holes  
The sons of bourgeois have their nests  
The heroes never know where to lay their heads  
But wherever they lay, they become immortal;  
Under a richer dust concealed  
Their divine-eyed constellations  
In eternal reign  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The flower of freedom needs blood at its roots  
For, without the sacrifice of the brave it cannot survive  
It springs from the cinders of the pyre  
From the burning, treeless sand dunes of the Thar;  
From the aging but stately tree of freedom  
May spring fear and grief  
Or excruciating pain  
To be finally dissolved into delight;  
And heroes in joy  
Launch out on trackless ocean;  
And sail on waves of ecstasy

## THUS FELL THE BRAVE CHAMPAVAT SONAG

Amid the buffetting winds;  
Singing the songs of freedom  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Freedom strangled  
But how could Maroo die;  
Triggers pulled; bullets raged  
Aroused the dead and the living alike  
The heroes awaken from the bleeding Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Freedom is adrift where lust  
And self and greed  
Of gain reside;  
Freedom vanish  
Where sheaths of sham and masks of shame  
And breathless awe of name and fame prevail;  
Freedom a soft-spoken word  
Never could it be held without a battle;  
Sonag fell but not lost  
The dead did not fight in vain;  
When all seems dead  
There arise a new spirit  
And dignity and freedom surface  
In joy ineffable  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

## The Valorous Champawat Ajah

With Champawat Sonag's death  
The hinges of the Rathores were broken;  
The muse of history  
Is wretched verities  
Confounded them thoroughly  
In the battle of Pandelore;  
And gnawing fear  
Spread over the lanky faces of the people  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh ! who has torn asunder my wreath of flowers  
My days of glamour gone  
My gorgeous decoration despoiled  
My dazzling honour outraged  
My splendour lies in lumber still  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Why should I bother ?  
And grieve for my palmy days;  
My sons unmindful of the glorious past  
But afraid of it all the same  
Had really hit the rock bottom;  
Turned out the gushing streams of loyalty  
In bright and brilliant luminosity  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The blood of my sons in the slumber  
Never could be number  
A bliss that could never fade;  
A wave of verve  
Is still harving to and fro

Moving, rising and swelling  
In the wavy vibrations  
Unrestrained in the playful bosom of the Thar  
Full of vivid life  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In the sapphire-tinted sky  
In the deep misery of the inmost;  
The flames of sacrifice  
Over the unsettling gloom  
Over the hoary ruins;  
Behold and beckon  
In mounting vigour  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Dreams aroused in sleep  
Dissolve at the dawn of morn  
But borne on death  
Never faint or dim  
The heroes reach such unusual heights of dreams.

The blood of the wounded  
Fell on the pallid lips of the sands  
Made an island pool  
Revived out of dust, a new-born fragrancY  
Bloomed over weedy pain of the Thar.

The corpses beckoned the living to free Maroo  
The bones glistened in the dark of the Thar  
The skeletons reminded the sacrifices made in the past  
Spiritedly, selflessly  
Without wanting anything in return  
Guided by the noble emotion, patriotism  
To avenge defeat and humiliation  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Oh I listen, listen, the heroes dead  
Lie buried in the desolate Thar;  
Rise and fight like a pride of lions  
To shake off inertia and indolence;  
To ensure blaze of immortality  
An inspiration to the yet unborn  
In the dark wintry land  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Sonag's departing message  
And Durga's iron will  
Unfolding their radiance from afar;  
Inspired the inflexible soldiers of Marwar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Thar is the natural home of the brave  
The abode of the lions;  
Where every particle of it is stamped with  
daring and courage  
Never has it run out of them  
Nor deprived of heroes and heroic deeds;  
Lo ! in the clamorous beating of the drums  
In acclamatory shouts;  
Champavat Ajab, the elder brother of Sonag  
Who at Pundalote  
Had shown the sharpness of his sword;  
Proclaimed as the Commander of the liberation forces  
To carry forward the struggle for freedom  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A man with mighty prowess  
Champavat Ajab, like a prowler  
Ravaged the Mughal outposts  
In Deedwana, Merta and Kasumbi;  
In hot chase, the enemy pursued  
And a furious battle raged

## THE VALOROUS CHAMPAVAT AJAB

The battle of Degarana  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In knit brows  
In ferocious uproar  
And with great speed  
The armies of Maroo and the Mughals  
Like colossus, like leviathans  
In violent outbursts of temper  
And blood-curdling noises  
Dashed to trample and crush each other  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The sands pulverised  
Its dust blown up in the atmosphere  
Like the smoke of a forest set afire;  
The sun veiled in panic  
And a pale dusk of horror hung  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In reckless rage  
Leaped Champavat Ajab  
On the Commander of the Mughal forces;  
A fierce, well-contested battle  
Where the rout of the enemy had just began  
Oh ! cruel fate ! he cried  
A fatal blow from behind  
Cut-off the posterior of his horse;  
A sudden pain, a sharp pang  
The powerful horse on the ground fell;  
And Champavat Ajab's hand jerked back in sudden terror  
Rumbled over the sands;  
Instantaneously he rose  
Wholly out of control  
And saw the dear mate, the loyal horse  
Sinking painfully into death

VEER DURGADAS RATHOKE

"Ah, what a pity to lose such a horse  
For want of skill to manage him  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar".

In maddened rage  
In the helter-skelter of the battle  
In the welter of confusion  
Ajab leaped ahead  
Like a horse over a fence  
And cut-off heads in numbers  
Who came within the sweep of his sword;  
Lo ! in the deep den of the enemy  
In its evil coils  
Ajab's loud deep hoarse roar  
Silenced by the sword, stretched wide  
His head moved quickly through the air  
Fell inches apart, from his dear mate :  
Oh ! lift me from the sands  
I faint ! I fall ! I die !  
Let thy benign grace bless one and all  
Over the sandy wastes of Marwar.

For a moment, a flickering moment  
Met fading eyes of Champavat Ajab and the loyal horse;  
Parting at last  
Sad reflections, burst upon the dying brows;  
The closing lids  
In sadness revealed  
The last trace of fidelity  
In each other's exhausted retina of the departing eyes;  
A look of recognition flitted past  
And having said adieu passed into eternity;  
A epitome of loyalty, with no disguise  
When both were on the brink of death;  
Trust pure and unsullied, mutely expressed :  
In life as in death

With a promise to transcend death and oblivion;  
Faith is eternity  
Eternity is in faith;  
Draw close, Oh dear  
Whoever knows it  
Knows all  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! the body and the soul  
Of Ajab and the horse  
Died into this life, yet not alone  
Became one ! To live beyond !  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In despair and sadness  
Against the lurid sky  
Weapons clanged murderously  
Like a lone, mute witness Champavat Ajab stood  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The heroes rendezvous with death  
Crumbled down and despair reigned in Degarana  
Scuttled their joy from the gloomy earth  
And their urge for immortality ended in blissful sleep  
In groggy awakenings, they pleaded  
To cast away sorrow and pain  
And sing the paeans of freedom  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The murderous noon spread over the Thar  
The vultures from above glared  
The searing winds blew over its sands  
The restless silence tawdry like sawdust laughter  
Heroes under sorrow's slab, on perpetual parade  
Though dead as nails  
Lift their heads, through an invisible shake



VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

To face the hammers of Aurang;  
Hearts possessed of will often rise even under the  
pain  
And defy the might of the oppressors  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*The Untiring Champavat Udai*

The shadows of the battle of Degarana  
 Tragically laid  
 A grievous injury  
 On the pride of Maroo;  
 Piteous night  
 Full of unrest in the dark  
 Musing on her evil plight;  
 Hopes slain and undone  
 Pain wandered through her bones like a raging fire  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The shutter of time in disfigured stars  
 Closed ceaselessly amid spreading gloom;  
 Dark fumes raged  
 In the battle-scarred Maroo;  
 Bewildered ! the past leaped at her throat  
 Lo ! occurred a great rumbling  
 Durga's unbroken glory in concentrated radiance  
 Echoed a call, under a desert heaven :  
 Enslaved Maroo !  
 Why fear those who kill the body ?  
 For who can kill the soul of the race ?  
 Arise, Oh heroes ! Arise !  
 Nothing is eternal—except Eternity  
 We are in the eternal  
 No one can die;  
 No one has any immortality  
 Save his ideal;  
 Freedom could never be dead  
 Its sparks are beneath thy lids;  
 Look in the mirror of the past

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

It is full of eyes;  
The smiles of the dead  
The inspiring past, where future gleams  
Is the way by which all pass  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The shadows lingered under the sands  
Entombed in immortality  
Lo ! who was afraid of the devil ?  
The nightmare of fear was broken  
The elemental vigour aroused  
The fabulous fountains resprung;  
With this, Champavat Udai  
Proclaimed as the Commander of the liberation forces  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fearless and bold  
Renowned for courage and chivalry;  
Brave and vigorous  
Udai never feared for his life;  
With a halo of past glory  
Radiating over his forehead  
He gave up his pleasures and pastimes  
As a precious offering to the cause of his motherland;  
And moved ahead, in immense strength  
In fierce, cruel temper  
Like a savage mammoth;  
To avenge the shame of humiliation  
And wreck his vengeance  
Against the blows of Aurang's tyranny  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Who could crush the dogged will of Champavat Udai ?  
Predatory wars continued  
Looted the enemy, harassed them  
Chased them in the plains of Gujarat;

Swept over Sojat and Jalore  
 Mandal, Sarwadpur and Todda  
 Beheaded the Mughal Commander Noor Ali;  
 With new triumphs added to his feather  
 Champavat Uday in glory moved  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! one day Durga's call descended  
 Its message stirred Champavat Uday :  
 The present shall fall, the future shall rise  
 Night and lust shall tumble down  
 A new bright elegance  
 In gentle veils shall dawn;  
 The vision blossoms from the ground  
 Through the forest of the dead  
 The desert in disguise  
 Laughs in the mirth of its darkness;  
 The dead never perish, they too fly  
 They are not lost, they are transfigured;  
 Death is another kind of life  
 As life is another kind of death;  
 The dead are immeasurably alive  
 Their souls carry a message  
 Freedom out of obscure shadows surface  
 And dance on the bodies of the dead;  
 The future is a virgin  
 Existence moves towards a certain end  
 An ideal all freedom lovers understand;  
 Freedom is in sight  
 Like the gliding of the moon from darkness to light;  
 Continue the struggle  
 Struggle implies hunger  
 Hunger implies hope;  
 A soul without stomach  
 Can alone move towards future;  
 Endurance has its lustre and glory

It alone  
SAVES  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Kichi Mukandas Brought Prince Ajit  
Out of Hiding*

Eight years had lapsed  
Since Jaswant's death;  
The dual between freedom and bondage  
Endurance and oppression  
Will and domination  
Continued ceaselessly  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Prince Ajit kept in hiding  
Away from the Mughal rage;  
None knew the whereabouts and his disguise  
Except Durga and Kichi Mukandas.

Durga was in Deccan  
Alone Kichi Mukandas  
In the guise of a *Sadhu*  
Kept a wakeful watch on Ajit.

Distress abounded  
Maroo became impatient  
To have a glimpse of Prince Ajit  
The fond dream of her heart  
The solace of her sorrow  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Hada Durjansal of Bundi  
A famed warrior  
A terror to the Mughals  
Landed on the sands of Maroo

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

With a crack contingent of soldiers  
To boost the sagging morale of the Rathores.

In languish laden sorrow  
The Rathores saw  
A well-timed, heavenly opportunity  
And begged before Hada Durjansal :  
Without the sight of Prince Ajit  
Bread and butter have no flavour !  
Reverend Hada Durjansal  
Employ thy good offices  
Persuade Kichi Mukandas  
A tough guy  
To bring Ajit out of hiding  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A diplomat in the guise of a *Sadhu*  
A brave in the garb of a hermit  
For Kichi Mukandas  
Durga was the ideal and the instance  
Whom he could never betray;  
The chiefs and nobles of Maroo  
Who had repeatedly implored before him  
To them he politely declined  
Pleaded his ignorance about Prince Ajit's whereabouts  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Hada Durjansal of Bundi  
Appeared before Kichi Mukandas  
And pleaded :  
Shielded from the sun  
Dim and partial darkness  
Had crept in the camp of the Rathores;  
In limping gait  
The evening had wrapped them  
Insanely eager had they become

For a glimpse of their Prince;  
*Sadhu* Mukandas  
 Please put spirit in them  
 Encourage them  
 To carry on the fight for freedom  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Pretending perplexity  
 Kichi Mukandas kept mum  
 Looked as if he heard nothing;  
 Like a dumb *Sadhu*  
 Refrained from speech  
 And engaged in thoughtful meditation :  
 Who could bring Prince Ajit out ?  
 Without Durga's consent !  
 An infant of eight years  
 How could he face the dagger of Aurang ?  
 Ideas clashed  
 Doubts and suspicions grew  
 To make decision difficult;  
 Far off from Durga's abode  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The indomitable Hada Durjansal  
 Could guess  
 Kichi Mukandas's bewilderment  
 The riddle of his mind  
 The predicament of his soul;  
 Perhaps a tangle between loyalty and the interests  
 Loyalty to Durga and the interests of Maroo;  
 It was this puzzle, and this alone  
 That could have tormented the *Sadhu*  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In the characteristic pride of his race  
 Mingled with the grains of politeness



Hada Durjansal then spoke :  
 Not only was he Prince of Maroo  
 But in his eye, Ajit  
 Was a Prince of Hadas too;  
 Who could dare to harm him ?  
 The Hadas of Bundi  
 Who had shown their mettle  
 To the Mughals, in the battle of Samugarh;  
 Could even carry the lamp in the violent wind  
 Or could take a plunge in the swelling river;  
 Could blow like a hurricane  
 To defend Prince Ajit  
 And to uphold the interests of Maroo  
 Against the machinations of the enemy;  
 Why worry ? *Sadhu* Mukandas  
 The valour of the Hadas  
 Could spread havoc in enemy's camp ?  
 Lo ! the mighty Durjansal  
 Placed his sword at *Sadhu's* feet  
 A symbol of reverence and promise  
 To face the enemy's burnt  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A fresh thought awakened  
 A new feeling arose in *Sadhu's* mind;  
 Infused with a breath of inspiration  
 The puzzle dissolved  
 Melted away from *Sadhu's* psyche;  
 Perhaps could be a betrayal  
 But the interests of Maroo prevailed  
 As against loyalty to an individual;  
 And *Sadhu* Mukandas  
 Brought into open  
 The trust he had looked after so long;  
 Prince Ajit appeared from his hiding  
 And stood like a young cub

KICHI MUKANDAS BROUGHT PRINCE AJIT

Enough to please the assembled coterie of the nobles  
Near Sanderao  
Where fresh hope and joy sprung out of the heaviest sorrows  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Prince Ajit—A Bud of Hope*

In the state of excited feelings  
 In wide-spread euphoria  
 The nobles and soldiers moved to strong emotions  
 Of joy and pain  
 Of happiness and suffering;  
 When in their midst  
 In the glittering robes of a Prince  
 In the insignia of royalty  
 Invested with the decorations of royal house  
 Shining radiantly in Jaswant's reflected glory  
 Stood Prince Ajit.

Out of the impenetrable obscurity  
 In pure, personified innocence  
 In spotless grace  
 And untainted brilliance  
 Like a luminescent figure, a picture of happiness  
 Stood Prince Ajit, a messiah of hope  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Sorrows waned, sadness diminished  
 Nobles looked at each other hopefully  
 To a bright future  
 And greeted with shouts :  
 Victory to Durga  
 Long live Prince Ajit  
 Long live the son of Jaswant  
 A ray of hope  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

As the lotus expands with the sunbeam

So did the heart of each soldier  
At the sight of their infant sovereign;  
They drank in his looks  
As the *papaya* in the month of *Asoj*  
Sips drops of ambrosia from the *Champa*  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Prince Ajit a tender teen-ager  
Green and gracious  
Unripe and raw  
Looked promising, assertive and brave  
As he stood, on the soil of Sanderao  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

As a look at the first leaf  
Sprouting on a sprig, shows the tree  
The nobles and soldiers could see the promise  
That a lively, brisk tree was in the offing  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fair and slender-limbed Ajit  
Young but youthful looking  
Gave insight to the assembled nobles  
Into his manliness when grown  
And the leadership he would provide  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Then commenced a splendid display  
Of feudal pomp and show;  
Puffed up and inflated with pride  
The chiefs and nobles of Maroo  
Displayed the spectacle of feudal hierarchy  
Offered *Nazar's* and *Nazarana's* to Ajit;  
A typical feudal way of showing reverence and gratitude  
To their Prince  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

All done ! shouts of :  
Glory to Prince Ajit ! Glory to Durga !  
Resounded in the desert  
Rejoicing overtook one and all  
A hope dawned on the pale faces of the people;  
The trodden and sullen souls  
Saw a rising sun, moving upwards;  
Saw a cloud in the sky  
If a cloud floated, could rains be far behind  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Nurtured in the womb of adversity  
In Durga's school of endurance  
Where agony was the constant mate;  
The metal of Prince Ajit toughened  
As years rolled;  
For pain proved to be a promise  
And like a rock of Aravali, he stood  
For rocks stay where they are  
Unmindful of ravages and storms  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Aurang came to know  
Of Ajit's appearance in Maroo;  
The wheel of fate turned  
The waves of anger engulfed  
Aurang moved in to complete his task;  
The mighty Mughal cannons  
Rumbled over Maroo;  
Wars and plunders followed  
A fearful deluge let loose  
To capture Prince Ajit;  
In vengeance the liberation forces repulsed  
Vowed to protect  
The only surviving legacy of Jaswant  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*The Homesick Durga*

Pain after pain  
 Durga had seen  
 Fighting under the banner of the Marathas  
 In the battles of Bijapur, Sholapur and Golkonda  
 Of Ahmadnagar, Mahuli, Panhala and Nimgoan  
 In the plateau of Deccan  
 Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In unwieldy moments  
 A thought struck Durga's mind :  
 Maroo in agony  
 A dagger thrust in her heart;  
 Shierking in moonless nights of pain  
 In the lonely pastures of the dead;  
 She is bleeding  
 Let her bleed to the last  
 Freedom alone could heal her wounds;  
 Let her fall  
 If fall she must  
 To find a way out of her misery;  
 She is like a wing that soars  
 For her there is no abyss;  
 Ascent and descent are the same to stars and souls  
 The path which plunges to the abyss  
 Is the same that mounts to the summit  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The natural rocks of the Deccan  
 That surround my soul  
 Now blazing in unnatural light;  
 Jagged cliffs and gloomy ravines

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

Where grisly tales of woe float  
Sad, savage and monotonous thoughts  
Assail me, in the waste of howling wilderness  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

How slowly dies Time ?  
In the black pale of the Deccan;  
Time floats on a watery course  
Beyond the end of mossy clefts;  
The thorns and brambles strike  
As Time slide  
In the grey ravines of the South  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

As I grow, I love Maroo  
Her softness, her ruggedness, warts and all;  
Love is the soul of my life  
Joy is the soul of my love  
For the soul, to live is to love  
Every loss of love is a loss of soul  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

I am the son and father of Maroo  
Where my flesh and spirit genuflect  
For she alone is the Being  
The power and bliss of my life;  
I hold her too dear  
My ears still hear the drums  
My soul echoes to the call divine  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

For her I have tortured my body  
Like a slag it bleeds;  
My ribs like leaves are in the dust  
But my soul retains what the body has lost;  
Bound I am body and soul

## THE HOMESICK DURGA

To love and worship, worship and love her;  
She is the fulcrum of being the sum of my existence  
The mellifluous delight of my soul  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The riddle is now no more  
My body  
Moves towards a goal  
The wild longings of the insatiable heart  
Longing for something without knowing why ?  
Body has many motions, soul one  
Body met mind  
Mind met conscience  
And conscience flowed towards the soul  
What else to say ?  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! an idea took shape in my mind  
A light inside me beckons  
Time is ripe to bend my steps homeward;  
I am a homing pigeon  
Never can my paths divert;  
My affections lead me home  
Like a bird in periodic migration;  
I move fast to return to my nest  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo is my land  
For my soul feels to be so;  
Her shadows are the proof of the sun  
Even in trouble, pure waters reveal her depths  
Her soul, like limpid water conceals nothing  
Allows to be seen what others keep hidden  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So thought



VEER DURGADAS RATEORE

Durga moved from the Deccan  
Towards Marcc;  
To regain lost freedom  
And to strike the last nail in the coffin of the Mughal  
Empire  
In the burning sands of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

History is the crucible of eternity !  
The time is perpetual renewal !  
Soul is history ! It can even defeat history !  
The progress of the soul is the soul of all progress  
Work for freedom is endless  
With no reward save the work itself  
The ideal is the future;  
Future is folded in will and endurance  
Who could crush freedom under the blows of its hammers ?  
Who could crumple the grains of the valiant ?  
The greater the obstacle the greater the triumph  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Durga-Akbar Friendship*

It was time to bid farewell  
To Prince Muhammed Akbar  
An uncommon gem of the Mughals  
Displaying uncommon quality, he tolerated  
Sufferings and humiliations  
Let loose by Aurang;  
A thought occurred in Durga's mind  
To take him to Maroo;  
But the fiery passions of the Mughals  
The avenging frown of Aurang  
Prevented it;  
Prince Muhammed Akbar thence decided  
To proceed to the fabled land of the Mughals  
The historic land of Persia  
Far off from Hindustan.

In a burst of feelings  
Durga and Akbar  
Expressed their heartaches in expressions deep;  
The fountains of fondness  
That lay beneath, swelled  
From each other's chest into their throats;  
A warm hug  
A final tear for their long friendship  
Swelled over their worried faces;  
Soaked with the pathos of separation  
Durga affectionately expressed :  
Farewell ! Farewell ! Oh Akbar  
Farewell ! dear comrade of my life  
The last farewell ! Dear Akbar  
My only friend in the wilderness

Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar

So done  
Durga in great haste  
Like a dutiful bird  
Rushed towards his nest  
As the shadows of evening fell thick  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga-Akbar friendship  
Dazzled in the fullness of loyalty;  
A friendship between a Hindu and a Muslim  
That too in an age  
Of persecution and fanaticism  
Of religious bigotry and anger of Aurang  
In the land of Hindustan.

Religions do not create conflicts  
They are the paths to the same end  
But history of religion is soaked with blood;  
Each religion is a unique flower in God's garden  
But few realise its import and many resent it;  
The purpose of all religions is to help realise the same goal  
The goal of salvation;  
Only the fences differ  
Devised by the man of God  
The timid man  
Who makes a temple the universe  
Invent dogmas, the living faith of the dead  
Which become the dead faith of the living  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Adversity tests man's fibre  
It is the best school  
The cradle of friendship;  
Tolerance cements oneness

## DURGA-AKBAR FRIENDSHIP

Understanding deepens it;  
They open new vistas  
Far beyond the realms of religion;  
Both Durga and Akbar  
Had undergone pangs of adversity;  
The bonds of tolerance and understanding  
Were like a buckle that fastened  
A hyphen that joined them firmly  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Durga Moved Back to Marco*

The dawn's early light  
 So mildly bright and shining  
 Spreading a red expanse over the horizon  
 Over the sandy grey, barren and rocky prospect;  
 Over angry brooks and wild cascades  
 Murmuring hoarse in dark glens  
 In the enchanting plateau of the Deccan;  
 Durga in unabated zeal, hurried in high speed  
 In fervent flight and conviction fresh;  
 Towards the glimpses of far-stretching Marco  
 To fulfil a worthier cause  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

With endurance charged afresh  
 The giant call rung in Durga's ears;  
 That a man without faith  
 Could hardly move straws  
 Let alone mounds of sand;  
 Faith alone invigorates existence  
 Withered bush and grass turn green  
 Turning a desolate land into paradise  
 A miraculous re-birth;  
 Where divine pleasure can be seen everywhere  
 In murmuring brooks, in foaming falls  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Passing over the savage clefts  
 Over stern and steep rocks  
 Where the hills descend deep into extensive vales;  
 Where the Mughal hounds  
 In hot pursuit

## DURGA MOVED BACK TO MAROO

Behind his passage ply;  
Durga hastened like a falcon  
On wings of lightening swift  
Over rugged terrains and inhospitable land  
Full of thorns and bramble;  
Over bridges spanning voids  
Over gloomy noon and steamy evening  
Full of dusty and smoky light;  
Over the swamps and ghostly jungles of Jhabua and Dhar  
Where beetles hum, crickets chirp  
In faint, yet shrilly tone;  
Where an owl flaps its brooding wing  
In sheer boredom and melancholy;  
Over the deep waving fields of Ratlam and Malwa  
With ashen splendour, sobbing in grief  
Lamenting the ravages of time  
Over the dark grave and dying groan;  
Lo ! Durga reached Mewar  
Where he reposed for a while  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The news of Prince Ajit's early appearance  
On the sands of Maroo  
Was conveyed to Durga in Mewar;  
Amazed and astounded  
Tension mounted in his fogbound solitude;  
A painful wave of worry  
Like hard stones  
Pelted at his heart;  
The shoots of pain  
In airy form  
Hovered over his mission's path;  
Shocks and set-backs  
In unbroken line  
Shattered his smile like a broken toy;  
And in a moment of grief

He cursed Kichi Mukandas;  
 Who paid no heed to his instructions  
 And brought infant Ajit out of hiding;  
 An untimely, unwise and profitless step  
 In the weary waste of the Thar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Durga !  
 Hail to his nobleness !  
 In suppressed rage  
 With mild and manly fortitude;  
 Swallowed the pills of pain  
 Of Ajit's early appearance from the hiding;  
 Without tarrying he sped  
 Over a swift, matchless horse;  
 With lightening speed, and reached Nagena  
 A village near Jodhpur;  
 To pay obeisance to the family diety  
 The famous goddess Nagnecha;  
 Thence proceeded to Barmer  
 In the heart of the Thar;  
 To look after the family of Prince Akbar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Slightly displeased with Prince Ajit  
 Durga disliked the role of the nobles  
 Who cast their unwanted shadows upon the Prince;  
 But Ajit showed a graceful gesture  
 Paid a visit to Durga  
 And the differences melted like butter;  
 Ajit then accepted Durga's advice  
 To continue to live as before for sometime more  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

With added zest and hope  
 Durga reorganized the liberation forces;

## DURGA MOVED BACK TO MAROO

Embarrassed the Mughal outposts  
Obstructed their trade routes to Gujarat;  
And defeated the Mughal Governor of Ajmer  
In an open battle;  
Success after success  
Bowed before the onslaught of Durga;  
The long miserable noon began to drift  
And the radiant head of freedom  
Appeared beckoning  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's pivotal role  
His puissant efforts;  
Put Aurang pell-mell  
Whose efforts began to go waste;  
In vain Aurang bit his flesh with fury  
For Durga's caravan  
Turned up with plough and furrow  
Was firmly poised towards freedom  
And to cut in twain the shackles of bondage  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.



*Durga Cut-off Shamsheer Khan's Head*

One day in the remote Aravali  
In the dark thick jungle  
In the mansions of sorrow;  
A screaming voice of pain  
An upsetting wailful lament  
Sounded in Durga's ears;  
He galloped quickly  
In devouring anxiety  
Towards the scene.

Amazed ! Surprised !  
A gang of the enemy  
In hateful rage  
Prowling like a beast of prey  
Pestering two innocent souls;  
Durga unsheathed his sword  
Challenged the chief of the gang;  
His gauntlet accepted  
A bloody dual ensued;  
And a powerful stroke  
By Durga  
Cut-off the head of the chief;  
It rolled and bumped  
And fell in a ditch;  
The rest of the gangsters cried :  
'That Khan Zorawar is slain';  
And in a muddle of tangled agony  
In utter panic  
They fled for their dear life  
Towards the aimless stretches  
Like a scudding cloud

In the clefts of the Aravali  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The slain Zorawar Khan  
Was the brother-in-law of Khan Shamsheer  
The Mughal *Subedar*  
Of the fortress of Kantaliya;  
The news  
Excited the wrath of *Subedar*;  
In great haste, he moved  
Through the tortuous tracks of Aravali;  
And, in the pitch dark  
Located a mean shanty  
Where Durga's mother  
An old, feeble woman  
Struggling with the ravages of age  
Dwelt.

In anger, the *Subedar*  
Enquired from the old woman  
The whereabouts of Durga :  
'Oh ! foolish *Subedar*  
Why harass an old woman ?  
No mother would ever disclose  
The hide-out of his son  
Come ! what may !'  
So uttered Durga's mother;  
The brute in *Subedar* burst out  
And in mad rage  
Leapt with his sword  
On the poor woman;  
Though senile and weary of age  
Courage still coursed in her veins  
From the long-forgotten days of her youth;  
The old woman summoned all her strength  
To face the wrath of *Subedar*;

Offered a tough resistance  
 But her sword broken into two;  
 Her fate betrayed  
 A deadly hit by the *Subedar*  
 Beheaded the old emaciated woman  
 In the ill-lit terrains of Aravali  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A heinous murder !  
 A cowardly deed !  
 Durga at the end of his tether  
 With emotions deeply hurt  
 Vowed not to take food or water  
 Till the ignoble *Subedar*  
 Was paid back for his treacherous deed  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In forced marches  
 The untiring Durga  
 With emotions keyed up  
 Moved towards the fortress of Kantaliya;  
 On way collected and tot up  
 A batch of sturdy soldiers;  
 And in the twilight of the sunset  
 Reached the destination;  
 Where the *Subedar*  
 In a merry *mehfil*  
 In a noisy carousal  
 Enjoyed laughter and song  
 And dancing by dainty damsels  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Under the canopy of the dark  
 In effective disguise  
 Durga made his way  
 In the midst of *mehfil*;



To use abusive words  
 In the fortress of my control'  
 So shouted Khan Shamsheer;  
 And in desperation  
 Fell upon Durga;  
 In a terrible fight  
 Khan Shamsheer's powerful strike  
 Like a bolt it fell  
 On the turtle like stout Durga;  
 With a loud savage shout  
 Summoning all his strength  
 With flames flying from every pore  
 Like a lightning flash  
 Durga's crushing stroke  
 A devastating hit  
 Cut *Subedar's* head off;  
 The titanic trunk tumbled on the ground  
 Helter-skelter the courtiers  
 Scattered like a colony of termites  
 In the fortress of Kantaliya  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

A Durga's soldier  
 Rushed in the harem  
 Caught hold of three women  
 Produced them before Durga  
 And said :  
 'Oh ! great master  
 Why not, cut-off any one head ?  
 Of your choice  
 To avenge the heinous murder  
 Of our mother';  
 Durga, the gentle human  
 Then spoke :  
 'The old woman is like my mother  
 The middle-aged, my sister

And the young one, my daughter;  
 A brave man is a haven  
 Who gives shelter  
 To the women  
 Against the ravaging storms;  
 Who would  
 Except the brute  
 Let loose his passion  
 On the fair sex  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar'.

So said  
 Durga freed the women  
 Himself rushed out from the fortress of <sup>Kantaliya</sup> ~~the~~  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

While crossing the sands  
 Durga saw  
 A rider in male dress  
 Galloping towards him;  
 Soon fell at his feet  
 And removed the helmet;  
 Ah ! what a surprise ?  
 The tresses fair spread over her comely face  
 Giving her youth a captivating look;  
 She then spoke with folded hands :  
 'The wind is weary  
 Poisoned with black fear;  
 My bower is gone  
 Dark shadows gather  
 Blotting out all stars from the sky;  
 Ah ! the evil day  
 An orphan wails  
 Being helplessly alone  
 And lustful people surround her  
 The bestial men

Who know nothing of moral restraint  
Savages they were born, savages they would die  
To rob and ravish  
The petals of my youth  
Under the sinful roof of Kantaliya  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar'.

The noble Durga  
Then said :  
'Is it worth  
To shed tears for your father;  
For the shadows of evil had thickened  
And God had taken him;  
The world is a bottomless chasm  
Where sorrows are mere freaks of mind;  
Where is shelter  
It is nowhere  
Except in the depth of one's self;  
Search it within  
Stick to it fast  
That is the only path  
Which can save you  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.'

In a despair of gloom  
She then prayed again :  
'Drive me not in the pit of snakes  
Mine is an evil time  
Where the strongest bonds give way;  
Vain is all hope  
It is chained up  
Fettered in misfortune and melancholy  
I know of no path  
In the pathless sea of life;  
Alas ! in a sullen depression  
I look to the eternal stranger

Full of moral courage;  
Me an innocent virgin  
Weak and without shield  
I wither in mounting fear !  
My youthful innocence begs of your support  
Save me by thy grace  
In the wilderness of the fortress of Kantaliya'.

'Trust me for the consequences'  
Vowed Durga to Hamida;  
The glamorous daughter of *Subedar* Shamsheer Khan  
To whom, he placed in the fort of Mandu  
Where Lalwa, the daughter of Raja Maha Singh  
Took fond care  
Till Hamida wore the bridal garments  
To wed a muslim of her choice  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.



*Durga Showed Grace Extraordinary*

Prince Muhammed Akbar  
When he moved along with Durga  
To the Deccan;  
Left behind, his infant son Buland Akhtar  
And daughter Safiyat-un-nissa  
In care and trust of Durga's man  
A reputed Brahmin-Joshi Girdhar Raghunath Sanchora;  
In an old fortress near Barmer  
An obscure place in isolation  
In the heart of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Joshi Girdhar Raghunath  
Adhered to Durga's instructions  
Nourished and nurtured the infants  
Showered the sacred affection of a father;  
Utmost care he took  
Of their health and morals  
And to impart education in the Islamic scriptures  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Aurang always harboured  
An ardent desire  
To get back his grand-children;  
The budding youth of Princess Safiyat-un-nissa  
Troubled and tormented him;  
For he feared  
The bestial lust, the human brute  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Days and years rolled by

Princess Safiyat-un-nissa  
 Beautiful and glamorous like a celestial nymph;  
 Sparkling like a mountain stream  
 Fresh like the morning bathed in dew;  
 Restlessness beating its wings in her veins  
 And clamouring for sensual delights unknown;  
 A heart so young danced with delight  
 And ached with the pain of adolescence;  
 Despite environment and climate  
 Training, company and instruction  
 The Mughal traits surfaced forcefully;  
 In a winsome smile  
 Glimmering like an amber-light;  
 The sinuous grace of her beauteous frame  
 Floating like the gay notes of the flute;  
 The moon-beams in a joy of beatific melody  
 Suffused her restless being  
 Around her unexpanded buds;  
 Her sweet shyness and the rhythm of enchanting music  
 Put to shame, even Venus  
 In the beguiling expanse of the Thar  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

An unfolding blossom of innocence  
 Like an unbodied joy  
 Flowering under a veil;  
 Adorned in virgin modesty  
 Her elegant bosom swell  
 To partake of the heady spring;  
 Descending like nature's balmy boon  
 On the soul-stirring garden of rapturous delight  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In an ecstatic melody of youth, singing secretly  
 In a world of fantasy yet so real  
 In a mood so passionate and intense

In the world of unending joy;  
Her perfect bodily loveliness  
Throbbing in the blissful air  
Moving up in innocent pride  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Soft and velvety; sweet and emerald  
Like a dew-drop on the tip of a flower-petal;  
In raven-like lively eyes  
In anarchic emotions  
Swelling like the waves of summer's ocean;  
In scarlet lips, full of red-hot passion  
In the charm of arched brows  
And cheeks like blushing cloud  
A orient pearl, with ruby red;  
The fabled Mughal beauty  
Like a mirthful mole on the cheek of the Thar  
Holding in her nectarine gaze  
Where even Gods seem wounded  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Aurang opened negotiations with Durga  
His emissaries—Shuja-at Khan  
Along with historian Ishwar Das;  
Approached Durga  
In the remote ravines of Aravali  
And begged for a favour;  
The grand noble Durga  
True to his vow  
Never did he look in the face of Princess Safiyat-un-nissa;  
Like the round stem of a tree  
That never kiss the sun  
Maintained a decorous decency;  
And even exchanged voice with her  
Always from a distance;  
Never did he wreck his manhood

Against a woman's charms;  
 To him the chastity  
 Of a damsel in his protection  
 Was more pious than his own life;  
 Lo ! he showed grace extraordinary  
 Agreed to the request;  
 And the royal caravan  
 Along with Princess Safiyat-un-nissa  
 Reached Islampuri  
 In the Imperial Court of Aurang  
 Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In the grey dawn of the Deccan  
 Heavily hung the gloom;  
 Earth so chilly and air screaming in woe  
 Sick almost to fainting, in breath in fading edges;  
 Aurang at last saw a young lassie  
 Springing up to life so delightfully;  
 His eyes hung loose  
 He knew not, what they mean !  
 Clasped Princess Safiyat-un-nissa in affectionate hands  
 In the lonely land of wild unrest  
 Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So done  
 In inquisitiveness  
 Aurang searched her countenance  
 To find the fragrance of chastity;  
 The sweet Princess Safiyat-un-nissa  
 Understood the motives of her grand-father  
 And then spoke :  
 If there is a god upon earth  
 He is Veer Durga  
 The gracious soul of decency;  
 If there is heaven on the motley earth  
 It is Maroo

The matchless abode of honour;  
Never did any snaky satan  
Ever crawl or hiss  
Over the undefiled charm of my beauty;  
Never did a bumble-bee  
Ever buzz  
Over the blooming bud of my flower;  
Never did any brutal man  
Ever cast his shadows  
In the unblemished sands of the Thar;  
Blessed be, the revered Durga ! Hail to Maroo !  
Where unpolluted, pretty grains of gold  
Blessings that never die  
Lie scattered in pristine purity  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Unbelievable ! cried Aurang !  
It can't be true !  
A wonder wells up in my soul  
A pagan plotting for my downfall  
Full of bestial strength, toil and sweat  
How could he rise to such great heights ?  
Of unmixed, spotless purity.

Unperturbed, the fair Princess  
Shook her head  
And spoke in a soft, emphatic voice :  
There is no night in my life  
The darkness of night is the image of your ignorance;  
Durga's light is the spirit that kindles  
Illumines all, slays none;  
He is a saviour  
In him devils have found repentance;  
He is a symbol of sacrifice  
His symbol is not in the cross  
But in the cradle;

Oh ! wise grand-father  
 Shake-off thy delusion;  
 Durga is worthy of reverence  
 A venerable soul of unfathomable love  
 In whom the streams of *Nirvana* flow;  
 Blessed be, the venerable Durga  
 In him a halo of Supreme Lord resides;  
 Oh ! dear grand-father  
 Faith does not lie among those  
 Who cleanse the body more often than the soul;  
 A man is like a silk worm  
 Who through its' own substance  
 Makes the thread and spins the cocoon  
 And is imprisoned inside;  
 He who develops faith  
 Alone can come out like a butter-fly;  
 Why be like a silk worm  
 Enveloped in desires;  
 Have faith  
 Through it the lowliest worm can attain divinity;  
 Remember ! To be human is difficult  
 To be human is to know thyself;  
 To abandon the path of the hawk and the grey falcon  
 And move with a grace divine;  
 Oh ! dear grand-father  
 Why fear to face Durga as a man ?  
 You can conquer him  
 If you can understand what I say  
 You will forgive all once for all  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Broken ! Broken ! Broken !  
 My unclean slumber broken  
 My soiled doubts torn  
 My murky vision cleared  
 The riddle is no more

VEER DURGADAS RATHORE

I am informed for a truth;  
And flowing back in the arms of vanished years  
A tear of sorrow and remorse  
Dropped from the eye of Emperor Aurang;  
Thence exclaimed mutely :  
A dawn ! A dawn !  
A splendid revelation;  
Blessed be, oh Durga  
A great soul  
Unrivalled in devotion and honesty;  
A gem among the gems  
A pearl among the pearls;  
Had I known it before  
The cracks and rifts  
Never could have appeared  
In the great *Mughal Empire of Hindustan*.

The past vanished like receding tide  
And with royal grace  
Asked Emperor Aurang, to his grand-daughter :  
'Tell me what reward Durga Rathore wants  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar'.

Brought up in the bower of Durga  
The unsullied bower of dignity and honour  
Princess Safiyat-un-nissa in a low voice said :  
'Perhaps Ishwar Das could answer that'.

Lo ! Ishwar Das answered that :  
'No favours !  
For a holy, devout man;  
Passions and desires torment only the wild  
Durga is a sacred  
A sainted and god-fearing soul  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar'.

Overwhelmed by the grace of Durga  
 Aurang unveiled another desire  
 To return Prince Buland Akhtar;  
 For Durga, the warrior-diplomat  
 Who could never play the game unskilfully  
 The cause of Maroo was foremost;  
 Very well he knew  
 That Prince Buland Akhtar  
 Was a full blooded heir to the Mughal throne;  
 A valuable political pawn  
 How could he hand him over ?  
 Without terms and conditions !  
 Terms finalised without much ado  
 Prince Buland Akhtar sent back  
 And Aurang almost sank under the obligation  
 Became a slave of Durga's soul  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In a moment of ecstasy  
 In a joyous state of feelings  
 The past melted in Aurang;  
 Durga appeared in the Mughal Court  
 On Aurang's request he sat aside his sword;  
 Delighted in the festivity  
 A royal reception was accorded to Durga;  
 A jewelled dagger, a gold *padak* and a string of pearls  
 Along with *mansabs* and *jagirs*  
 Granted to him;  
 Durga placed the *kharita* at his feet  
 Instead of on his head;  
 An indication to Aurang  
 Of the non-acceptance of the favours;  
 In eagerness  
 The Emperor requested to unfold the reason;  
 And thence Durga spoke :  
 "The heir of Maroo is Ajit



Decorations and favours  
Should be bestowed alone  
On the legitimate son of Jaswant';  
Over delighted at Durga's fidelity  
Emperor Aurang bestowed favours on Ajit;  
And then persuaded Durga  
To accept the decorations  
As a token of goodwill and friendship;  
Reluctantly Durga accepted  
In the interests of Maroo  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*The Death of Emperor Aurang*

Never did the great Emperor Aurang  
Ever knew that Durga's diplomacy  
Would entangle him for two and a half decades  
Against the Marathas  
In the rugged terrain of the Deccan;  
Fort after fort fell  
Before the Imperial fury  
Satara, Parli and Panhala conquered  
Khelna, Kondana and Rajgarh fell  
And Torna and Wagingera captured;  
The paradise of Deccan  
Reduced to ashes  
Its fields and pastures laid waste;  
But never did Maratha courage diminish  
Or their will drained;  
Relentlessly they continued  
The struggle for freedom;  
The Deccan ulcer ruined Aurang  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah ! In a twinkle  
In a moment  
And in a breath  
The condition of the world changes;  
Old times gone, old memories gone  
As, on a stormy sea, a spar is tossed by billows;  
Gone is the pride of power, vanity's shadow  
Blown by the blast of fate like dead leaf over the desert;  
Gone is the high ambition, the vain glorious outlook  
In the sunless pit of indefinite terror;  
Where the dying lamps burn

As the poisonous snake creeps into the nest of the swallow  
In the land of the Decan.

Aurang's hoary grained beard in silver rolled  
Infirm and frail  
He was ninety winters old;  
Body bent, teeth decayed  
In withered cheek and aged brow  
His plumes were scattering on the gale;  
In shrunken skin and brittle bone  
In faded eye  
With bones of dead underneath his flesh  
His hopes were blasted  
In the blazing pyre of the Decan.

Aurang saw the enveloping darkness  
Closing in an appalling disaster;  
Destiny drew on pondered to destroy him  
And the mighty Emperor  
Down he flung, his purse of gold;  
Broke the bowl of vanity  
Shattered the cage of bigotry;  
Drops of remorseful sweat fell from his brows  
Making the old Emperor feel reborn  
In the uneasy stillness of the Decan.

The mighty Emperor  
Who never did regret in his life  
Moaned in inner grief  
The last song of repentance:  
Weakness is enveloping me  
Strength has left my limbs  
A tired mind  
All heart, all ambition, gone  
Infertile as the form, useless as the hope  
Alone I come

And alone I go;  
 I know not who I am  
 And what I have done;  
 Oh ! vain is vanity  
 An empty quest for uncertain pride  
 Barren and airy name  
 Fickle as fleeting dream  
 Where the fortune fails  
 And the prize is gone;  
 Vanity is like a joy of the terrible  
 It is blind ! It is faithless ! It is false !  
 It gathers its plunder in ugly haste  
 Like a wild elephant  
 Uprooting the lotus from the pond  
 In the mountains and defiles of the Deccan.

Verily, bigotry is a sin  
 The greatest folly of my life;  
 The altering of revelations of koranic truths  
 Stand in my path;  
 The muezzin's call to prayer  
 Or a chantings of the priest  
 In remembrance of God  
 Is one and the same  
 Whether in a mosque or a temple;  
 Islam and Hinduism are not poles apart  
 Only the divine painter used diverse pigments  
 For blending the colours and filling in the outlines  
 In the glorious land of Hindustan.

Nothing have I done for the welfare of the people  
 And of the future there is no hope  
 The vista of human endeavour for me is closed for ever;  
 Cease to be king ! Oh, cease to be king !  
 If the welfare of the poor is ignored  
 If poverty and beggary make their nests;

Or harmless ants and flies are oppressed  
 For power and vanity;  
 Souls who torment others  
 Would suffer even in the seventh heaven  
 No soul can ever live in heaven  
 If in it compassion does not live;  
 Life, so valuable  
 Has gone away for nothing;  
 The Lord resided in my house  
 My darkened eyes  
 Never could see His splendour;  
 Nothing I brought with me  
 Only the thorns of sin, I carry:  
 What punishment shall fall on me  
 Nobody knows?  
 In the stony silence of the Deccan.

The world is made for the noble and pious  
 Blessed be; my grand daughter Safiyat-un-nissa  
 More wise than the Emperor of Hindustan;  
 Blessed be, my life-long enemy  
 The virtuous Durga  
 Who valued principles above Self  
 Deserves to be nestled in the heart of Thar  
 Where his memory shall ever shine  
 To inspire and to guide  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

My pride wallows in the mire  
 I am a lost star;  
 Life is mere tinsel  
 It is deceptive;  
 Follies and faults, I had committed  
 Forgive Me ! Oh, Allah  
 Let all truth be tested in death's court  
 Where peaks of eternal truth appear;

## THE DEATH OF EMPEROR AURANG

Pardon ! Pardon ! Pardon !  
Repentance is all that I can offer  
Bestow peace on me;  
Haste ! Oh, holy Allah ! Haste !  
Drive away all my guilt  
Haste, ere the sinner expires  
And make my path smooth from earth to heaven;  
With firm faith in Him  
In a stormy sea, full of turbulence  
In galloping darkness  
I launch my boat on the choppy waters  
I plunge into the shoreless sea  
Into the merciless waves of slumber and death;  
Farewell ! Farewell ! Farewell !  
The rugged rocks of the South  
The graveyard of my reputation  
And of body too  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Then suddenly through the gloomy air  
A flash of lightning came;  
Lo ! the Almighty Allah, heard Aurang's penitence  
Raised the dying man to glorious heights;  
As the body fell apart from the soul  
Allah poured heavenly comfort;  
In naked foot, and sackcloth vest  
And arms enfolded on his breast  
The mighty Emperor  
To the abode of Allah went  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Gone was the sword and sheath of Aurang  
His bosom gored with many a wound;  
But ever from that time, of his penitence  
Aurang became the greatest of the great, save one  
Of the Mughal sovereigns

Who adorned the throne of Hindustan.

Aurang's sorrows for sin and repentance  
Though belated  
Swung like rainbow arches  
In the firmament of Mughal glory;  
Where the whole cosmos looked like a dream  
And merged with the Infinite;  
Where all his sins pardoned by the Merciful  
Got him inside the portals of paradise;  
Over the blazing land of the Deccan  
Remote from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Aurang's last confessions  
That flickered in the withering petals of his sinking heart  
And echoed  
With sincere gratitude :  
That the land of Hindustan is for all  
Regardless of sex, creed and religion  
Whether it be the mountains of Deccan  
Or the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Durga's Life-long Vow Fulfilled*

Baulked at every step by Durga  
In defeat and despair  
In frustration and decay  
Aurang threw himself body and soul  
In the monstrous ravines of the Deccan.

With Aurang's exit  
Unrest gripped Hindustan  
Prestige and power declined  
And ruin was writ large everywhere;  
A war of succession followed  
And the mighty Mughal Empire gave way to anarchy.

Aurang's death  
Aroused hopes fresh  
In unbounded elation, Durga moved  
The spears drew blood, the swords clanged  
His pent-up strength made its way  
Like whirlwind's blast  
Knocking down all barriers of man and nature  
To achieve Maroo's long-delayed freedom  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga's liberation forces  
Along with Prince Ajit  
In fortitude and force  
Forged ahead to foil the enemy  
And laid a ring around the fort of Jodhpur.

'A formidable foe'; cried Khan Jafar Quli  
The Mughal *naib-faujdar* of the fort of Jodhpur;



Struck with fear and shocked with despair  
His struggle with dishonor  
And feeble resistance broke into fragments  
Leaving Jialapen in shameless  
Conscience with fear and shamed by panic  
John Qui begged abjectly for mercy.

The noble Dampé  
Then spoke :  
He who holds the body  
Gives up the soul  
He who surrenders  
Is an object of pity, not of scorn  
Who would withstand one's sword  
To slay a soul in distress  
Only an impious  
Could ever do this  
A brave man pleads  
A brave, godly human being  
Who risks life for the others  
In the early years of Martin.

So said Dampé, pardoned him  
And John Qui Qui  
Living with his family  
Moved to Almor  
Near the early years of Martin.

The Muslim domination came to an end  
Dampé's life-long joy fulfilled  
In belated splendour, full and free  
The massive heart of freedom aches  
The freedom's holy flame  
Like the gold in early days  
Purified with a brilliant flame  
Martin's glorious days

Her gloom dispelled  
A lofty occasion  
An imposing hour dawned  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The fort was mirthful  
The town burst into laughter  
As the colourful *panch-ranga*  
Flew and fluttered  
Over the sandy stretches of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! peacocks intoxicated with nectar-drops  
Humming bees clustered round the flowers  
New leaves budded forth  
Songs of joy resounded  
The hearts of men and women expanded with mirth  
As Prince Ajit sat on the ancestral throne  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In cheers and applause  
In joyous choral dance  
Maroo sang in acclamation :  
Glory to Durga  
Glory to her foremost son  
Whose name shall for ever shine  
In the mirror of history  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Durga the Forerunner of Mahatma Gandhi*

In a moment of joy  
At regaining the ancestral throne;  
Ajit offered Chief Ministership to Durga  
The hardy soldier of freedom;  
Who like an holm-oak  
Ever strong and sturdy  
Stood with Ajit;  
Unmindful of the joyless days  
Of the dark gruesome grottoes  
Of ghoulish grimness  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Grand and towering Durga  
Having fulfilled his vow;  
Considered pelf and power  
As pursuits of the unprincipled  
Drowned in a sea of desires;  
The lowly baseness  
Never could it pollute  
The lofty Durga  
Ever vigorous and steady  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Durga uttered  
Homilies to Ajit :  
Remember ! Dear Prince !  
Dubious is the game of power  
Where strange bed-fellows join  
In unholy compromises;  
Where self-seekers crawl  
In unsatiated hunger

Around the Prince  
For petty loaves and fishes;  
Where hoodlums come together  
To feather their nests  
Ruinous of public good;  
Where cheats form cliques  
To swindle and deceive the Prince  
In a tangled game of disguise;  
Where inferior people  
Managing public affairs  
Undermine credibility of the State;  
Where a perverted oligarchy  
Contaminate the limpid water of the pond  
And like a hydra-headed monster  
Destroy decency  
Eat up the vitals of the State;  
Where the chariot of the pure and the virtuous  
The honest and noble souls  
Is dragged into stinking quagmire  
To bluff and bamboozle people  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Merciless is the slaughter-house of power  
A durable source of envy  
Where a debased oligarchy  
Kill or be killed without mercy or constraint;  
It is a game of frauds  
Where greater frauds dominate;  
Where the perfidy of 'mine' and 'thine' prevail  
Where fair weather friends abound  
Swarm like locusts  
And predict the ruin of the State;  
Where an unresponsive bureaucracy  
Clog and quash the rights of the people  
Underneath the cloak of a Prince  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.



To carry on the hardest of all hard trades  
That is politics  
The art of state craft;  
Where quacks pretend as experts  
Where the crowds by means violent or peaceful  
Sweep away honour and power of the land;  
Where the racketeers exploit  
The mechanisms of power;  
Till the State becomes worm-eaten  
Its petals peter out  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Remember ! Dear Prince !  
How timid, timorous, reed-like frail  
Is the man;  
Who, like pendulum oscillates involuntarily  
From one extreme to another  
Mesmerised by opulence and glossy facade;  
Trapped by the trashy rubbish of self-gratification  
Wallowing in envy and weakness  
Begging at the door of the affluent  
In the tomfoolery of politics;  
Where his nobleness wears out  
And falls a prey to wickedness  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

This is the peril in politics !  
Awake ! Awake ! Dear Ajit  
Be wide awake;  
From the soft-tongued flatterers  
Who often cling around a Prince  
Through deceptive pathways  
In the festering jungle of power;  
Awake ! Awake ! Dear Ajit  
From the pests and bugs  
That prop up under humic condition

In the slippery forest of power;  
Awake ! Awake ! Dear Ajit  
For strange is the apiary of government  
Where the ruffians like bees buzz  
And sting ceaselessly  
To corner honey  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Awake ! Awake ! Dear Ajit  
Keep a watch on the ungrateful man  
Who promise and yet cheat;  
The rapacious beast  
Whose hunger aggravates  
As he feeds himself on all and sundry;  
The nasty savage  
Whose claws and fangs  
Are ever ready  
To tear into shreds  
The joys of others;  
The unholy bundle of desires  
Is the sole cause  
Of misery and perdition of the State  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Dear Ajit ! The Prince of Maroo  
What I say  
Is a word of caution ?  
Put thyself on guard  
Be a relentless tracker;  
Never slacken thy efforts  
Or loose courage;  
Nor give rein to  
The white-livered lords;  
Follow this homily  
Fulfil the aspirations of the people;  
Govern well, Dear Ajit

And signalise thy reign  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So said  
Durga politely declined  
The offer which Ajit made;  
And unknowingly became  
The harbinger of saintly politics  
The forerunner of Mahatma Gandhi  
The father of the Nation;  
Who was later born in the nineteenth century  
In Porbandar  
Near the sandy wastes of Marwar.



*Danger Hidden from Men*

The higher the time of a man  
 More the jealousy it arouses:  
 Jealousy is more powerful an emotion than sex  
 Which made its first race  
 In the minds of oligarchy around him  
 Their chests burst with richness of envy  
 Like the ripe pomegranates  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwan.

In the face of envy  
 Greatness suffers  
 Vulnerability increases  
 As hate escalates:  
 Its venom  
 Chooses the springs of nobleness  
 And wickedness pervades  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwan.

The natural emotion, jealousy  
 Seizes the oligarchy in vice-like grips  
 Who hide their real demeanour  
 Under a mask of wise facade  
 And in disguise play the dual game  
 Underneath a veil of reguery:  
 Like the spongy morbid growth of a fungus  
 In the silent wastes of a pond.

The lust of quick returns  
 Fastened in restless greed  
 Swelled with insatiable greed  
 In the hearts of oligarchy

## DURGA EXILED FROM MAROO

When Maroo's dark days ended  
Freedom dawned  
And the days to gain some private ends began.

In crooked restlessness  
Shame settled permanently over their brows;  
The oligarchy like parasites made their way  
In deceptive cliques and contrived paths;  
Vermin gushed from their unstopped holes  
And the grass around Ajit's shadow they praise  
To defile the image of Durga.

Strange are the ways of power  
It attracts more flies  
For its bowl is brimful of honey;  
Where tools with no handle come to fore  
Where man of no consequence  
Not worth a candle rule;  
Where out-dated oligarchy in glittering robes  
And minds in faded gloss;  
Offer advice in statecraft  
To the Prince;  
And sing the praises of hero-worship  
The greatest threat to freedom  
The hollow echo which defiles wherever it resounds  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Fickle is the flesh of man  
Jealousy puts the reason out;  
Lo ! a coterie of oligarchy  
Like wild-thorns encircled Ajit;  
Conceit groaned in their deep  
And unhampered they span a spider's web  
Till Ajit fell a victim  
To the lowly desires of the lords.

The oligarchy with some private axe to grind  
 Spilled deceptive words of flattery;  
 In glib and oily art  
 In the faithless guises of falsehood  
 To please Ajit;  
 Their wheel revolved rapidly to spin untruth  
 Till Ajit himself became a spindle in the process;  
 The unscrupulous oligarchy, with wily tricks  
 Moved in sinful wickedness  
 In a slovenly guise  
 Repeatedly uttered a whopper of monstrous lies  
 To defame Durga in the eye of Ajit.

The dew-bright diamonds on a viper's back  
 Dried its rectitude  
 Slow poisoned the ears of Ajit;  
 The glossy words of deceitful oligarchy  
 Slowly distorted the patriot's image  
 And made Durga villian of the peace  
 In Ajit's eyes;  
 Lo ! the feudal jackdaw  
 In the plumage of a peacock  
 In a tangled spool of twisted logic;  
 Played the game  
 And duped Ajit  
 In their foul nest of crafty designs  
 Carried like water in a platter  
 No shield ! Ajit could offer;  
 Against a herd of wild jackals  
 But without tears;  
 To tarnish the name and fame  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar

In a momentary madness  
 In indecent haste  
 Ajit gave a raw deal to Durga;

Exiled and banished him  
From the land of his birth  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah ! What price fame ! What price glory !  
Ah ! What a fall ? What a fall ?  
Of the ways of princely order;  
For the Ruler of Maroo  
For whom Durga spent a tortuous life of three decades;  
Could stoop so abjectly low  
Hang down in the dark pit of decline;  
Where fidelity  
On the strike of midnight pass  
Like vibrations of a bell;  
In the glorious sands of the Thar  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! the descent to hell is easy  
The evil oligarchy in spontaneous laughter  
Jump in joy over the dunes;  
As the good Durga went dishonoured  
In search of fields and pastures new  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

The sand-coloured, treeless Maroo  
Screamed in anguish woefully;  
Shocked pebbles and bricks  
Like a shower of arrows and splinters  
Fell over her heart and love;  
As her fond son was exiled  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Maroo was seized with an earthquake  
The earth trembled as if to protest  
The sky rumbled as if to complain  
Against the perfidy and wickedness of the conspirators

The aching hearts broke in pain  
Their aspirations like logs of the hut creaked;  
Numberless people felt badly let down  
In stygian darkness  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

My dreams decay, the body sicken  
My people crumble, the days rot  
My heart's flower withered at the root  
Turned pale, I weep tears of abject misery  
And curse the ugly, evil days  
In the suffocating night of misery  
And the dawn indefinitely delayed  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah ! strange are the paths of those who rule !  
When justice is taken away  
What is State  
But a band of robbers;  
When oil is over lamp goes out  
So it is with oligarchy and the Princes  
Once the oil that feeds their power is exhausted  
Faith and justice crumble  
The darkness creeps  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Ah ! what a contrast ?  
From man to man;  
Hail to Durga !  
Hail to the noble son of Maroo !  
Even radiant in pain !  
In joyful agony  
Obeyed the orders of emile  
Moved away unfalteringly  
In dress black, on a horse black  
Towards the track of Ujjain

Through the hillocks of Mewar  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Exiled though, blunt like a knife  
To soulful soul it causes no pain;  
To him each dawn  
In its womb brings  
A fresh wound to heal  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Humiliated and grounded in the dust  
Durga took his solitary way  
Under the wild and desolate sky  
In the weary gloom of the day;  
Ah ! Why fear pain !  
Pain is here and pain is there  
Pain is everywhere;  
For pain knocks at every door  
The poor man's hut or the palace of a king;  
Its tangled web is all around  
In the loathsome worldly life;  
He who never submits or yields  
To the furious rage of pain  
For him age, ache, penury and exile  
Is a heavenly bliss, a fulness divine  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Moving in the sultry noon of summer  
Durga saw a pond of water  
Inside the pillar-marks of Maroo;  
'Perhaps the horse is thirsty  
Let it quench its thirst' !  
So thought, Durga moved to the pond;  
With its fore-feet in the water  
The horse glanced in sadness and affection  
In the eye of his master;

In gestures it revealed  
 'No water ! Till the border of Maroo is crossed !'  
 A sublime flow of loyalty  
 Glimmered from the eye of the horse  
 Eyes can speak and eyes can understand;  
 Touched and moved in feelings  
 Durga thence mutely exclaimed :  
 Blessed me, my horse !  
 More loyal than the shaky man;  
 I pity the subtle body  
 Who quickly throw-off the old garments of loyalty  
 And yield to unreal ego  
 An illusory, false vision of the self;  
 I feel sorrow for the blasphemous man  
 Who succumb to impious desires  
 Where all goodness comes to an end and obligations sink  
 in the bottom deep;  
 Alas ! Why worry ? Why shake with teeth ?  
 To err is human, to forgive divine  
 Is a worthy merit of the soul  
 An adoration that could never die  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Durga reached Mewar  
 An adjoining State  
 Shining in the radiance of Maharana Amar Singh  
 The brother-in-law of Ajit;  
 The news of exile fell on the ears of Maharana  
 Aghast ! Amazed ! Enraged !  
 His body in a tremor of pain  
 Shivered in the agony of anger;  
 Provoked to fury, filled with resentment  
 In indignation he marched  
 To punish his brother-in-law  
 For a gross offence of great wickedness  
 Of banishing Durga from Maroo;

Hail to Durga ! the elevated soul !  
 Who stretched himself prostrate on the ground  
 Before the advancing cavalry of the Maharana  
 And thence in lofty voice spoke :  
 Reverend Maharana ! the sun of the Hindus !  
 Worry not, for my exile !  
 Man little knows the Omnipotent eye  
 His will to test the strength of my soul;  
 The old memories burst into view  
 Break before the mind's eye  
 Flash-back to the days gone;  
 When Jaswant made a shady umbrella over my face  
 In hot and searing sun  
 In a wild field near Jamrud  
 Where I lay asleep;  
 In an utter surprise  
 A courtier like a villian with a smiling cheek  
 Prayed Jaswant to disclose the secret of the gesture;  
 Rebuking the courtier, Jaswant said :  
 A genuine gesture on a genuine man  
 Is the duty of the master;  
 What I do today  
 Is a forecast for tomorrow;  
 That day is not far  
 When Maroo shall rot with decay  
 Shall burn in wrathful blaze  
 And beset with grisly terror;  
 When Durga alone shall be a bower  
 Of cool umbrage  
 Providing shady solace to her  
 Amidst the encircling gloom  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Only those who look backward to their ancestors  
 Are capable of moving forward to posterity;  
 My beloved master Jaswant



From the firmament of heaven beckons !  
 How could I be disloyal to him ?  
 How could I ravish the sapling, I have planted !  
 How could I make spilt milk, salty for the cat ?  
 Forget about the soiled desires of man  
 Which often find their outlet  
 In uncommon dirtiness  
 In the beautiful parlour of State's authority:  
 Retreat ! Retreat ! Oh, Maharana !  
 Retreat with grace !  
 Calm down your anger and your frown  
 For I forbid you;  
 Come on and kill me  
 Then alone over my dead body  
 March the hooves of your cavalry;  
 Never shall I permit  
 To ravage and despoil  
 The honour of my mother  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

In ghostly silence  
 Dumbfounded stood Maharana Amar Singh;  
 He dismounted from his horse  
 Uplifted Durga from the ground  
 And cried at the uncouth behaviour of his brother-in-law :  
 This is nothing but a blemish  
 A blot that has disfigured  
 The scutcheon of princely dignity:  
 A deed that has marred the glory of sacrifice  
 The vilest stain in legend and history;  
 So said  
 Maharana clasped Durga in affectionate embrace :  
 Blessed be ! venerable Durga  
 Thou art the embodiment of universal honour:  
 Blessed be ! the righteous Durga  
 Thou shalt flourish like the palm tree

Thou shalt grow like a cedar of holy Lebanon;  
 Never have I seen a greater man  
 Who could be destroyed but never defeated;  
 Thou art the resplendent symbol of a noble tradition  
 Thy inward grace shall ever radiate life beyond life;  
 Thou alone shall see God  
 On fame's eternal rosary;  
 Thy character is thy destiny  
 Thou alone could go through the travail;  
 Thy sacrifices are too deep to fathom  
 Thy life too noble to be recounted  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! the Maharana extended the patronage  
 And Durga stayed in Mewar  
 For a span of seven years;  
 Useful services he rendered to the Maharana  
 In the management of affairs in Rampura;  
 With wreckage of old age around him  
 He retreated to the holy abode of Ujjain  
 One of the seven holiest places in India  
 And abandoned himself to meditation and prayer  
 Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

One day seized in high fever  
 Durga lay in the hut of *Sadhu* Dharmadas;  
 The time is over ! Oh, *Sadhu* !  
 The sun's rim dips  
 A day of tender grace  
 In affection, beckons me;  
 Afraid ! Who is afraid of Him !  
 He is my dearest friend  
 The kindest and the noblest;  
 Let Him embrace  
 In the cradle of happiness;  
 Help me ! Oh, *Sadhu* Dharmadas

A brave never dies on the pallet  
 Put on the armoury on my body  
 For a warrior must die like a warrior  
 To attain salvation;  
 Durga mounted the horse  
 Proceeded towards the banks of Sipra;  
 Where in the lonely wild  
 Fixed his spear on the ground  
 And leaned his cheek on the other end  
 Lifting calmly his eyes toward heaven  
 He intoned :  
 It is time to part  
 My body, you and I;  
 Many a pain and battle we have seen  
 In the gloomy cavalcade of life;  
 Thou did never betray me  
 Thy deeds shall ever shine  
 And never shall they fade  
 In this mortal world;  
 Worry not, oh body !  
 Dust thou art  
 In dust thou mingle;  
 Let thy soul be in harmony  
 With the divine melody;  
 Come, Come ! noble death !  
 Come face to face !  
 Blow, blow divine wind  
 Blow, blow messenger of heaven;  
 I am ready to take a flight  
 Along with thee  
 Towards the abode of eternal bliss  
 And leave the mortal coil behind me;  
 Let the soul be laid in rest  
 In perennial repose  
 In the never-fading everlasting bliss;  
 Sail, oh soul !

Towards the shoreless sea;  
Swim, oh soul !  
In the fathomless ocean divine;  
Sing, oh soul ! the last song in complete fulness  
Harp on the last strings of melodious music  
That my love for Maroo shall never diminish  
My will stands steadfast to her  
In my mind and soul;  
She is ever green and fresh  
The greatest in the inmost of my heart  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

So thought !  
Durga breathed his last;  
Blessed be the faithful horse  
Who could sense  
That the master was gone;  
Stood motionless for long hours  
With the dead body of his master on its back;  
Lo ! *Sadhu* Dharmadas reached the scene  
And uttered in praise :  
What a glory ?  
What a loyalty ?  
Glory to Durga  
Who passed away like a warrior;  
Glory to the horse  
For its unflinching loyalty  
Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar.

## *Do Not Live and Live for ever*

The Day of Durga leaves the Ganges to an end  
Perhaps no end

Over like the Ganges flows as fall in this world  
Disaster at the bank of Sighs

Where under the canopy of the celestial blue  
There stand a remnant

In pillars adorned with pretty garlands

In garlands carry the images of our Hindu deities

And Durga with the diamond incarnation;

In glory and grandeur

In modesty carries

I am the lower

I am the higher

There is no lower, no higher, within me

In the sandy wastes of Marwar

The sunrises in material serenity

In the sanctuary of undisturbed peace

A reminder of great sacrifices

Of a life so unique and so noble;

As the sun with blinding radiance

Emerges from the horizon

Rises above the holy waters of Sighs

Away from the sandy wastes of Marwar

Reminiscences of Durga's loyalty

And the unforgettable saga of sacrifices

Would for ever flow

Through the expanse of the Time

Would for ever survive

Like the pyramids on the Nile

## DURGA LIVES AND LIVES FOR EVER

Would for ever smile  
Over the truths of endless sacrifices  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh, heart ! Cut with scythe the weeds of life  
That can't yield any good;  
Come to Durga's bower  
Where peacocks waltz  
And birds prance about;  
Where Sipra undisturbed flows  
Glide like pearls in the moon;  
Its fragrant zephyr pour out  
The divine song of freedom  
In its angelic grace;  
Soothing to each gloomy heart  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Its mild bosom of fame  
Reflect the venturous struggles of freedom;  
And blithely gush out the flower of faith  
In bubbling joy  
In nimbus of perpetual grace  
And keep its fragrance spread;  
Its pillars in serene calm  
Denote splendour of a by-gone age  
In far-up sparkles of fame  
And inspire in sublime murmur :  
I flutter in leaves; I hiss in winds  
I roar in the thunder; I roll in the surging storms  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Durga is in a happy abode  
An abode of existence Absolute  
A limitless and formless abode  
Of bliss and blessedness of the universe;  
Where roseate hives of nascent morn

The meadows, lakes and hills adorn;  
Where birds of golden plumages sing  
In a flood of vivacious symphony  
Blithe songs of peace and harmony;  
Where the sun of endurance, in its never-fading light  
And the soothing beams of moon, nectar sweet  
Gently glance and tingle;  
Over the tiny pearls of dew drops bright  
Over the unfading petals of spotless character;  
In ever gay glamour  
Of the blithesome rushing streams  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! Durga beckons !  
Come ! pilgrim come !  
Come not with the pain of mourning  
Come not with lamentations and tears  
Come not with sorrows and forebodings;  
Come along with an endurable will  
Where the head of freedom is held high  
Where the shackles of bondage for ever die  
And lowly passions sink in bottom deep  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh ! the pilgrim come ! Come !  
Come not in pale desires and dull wan  
Come not with pride, vanity and ego;  
Come along in faith and trust pure  
Come along in undimmed loyalty;  
And get along with me  
In everlasting delight  
In the boundless ocean of harmony  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh ! the pilgrim come ! Come !  
Come in visions beatific

Come in sublime thought  
 Come reminding of the glorious past  
 Come throbbing in the mirth of youth  
 And dance with me in joy and merriment  
 In glory divine  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Worry not ? Oh, pilgrim !  
 Worry not, for my pain and exile;  
 That was a call divine  
 That was the will of the Almighty Lord !  
 To measure the heights of glory  
 The depth of my fall;  
 To judge the purity of character  
 The force of my will;  
 The test the mettle of loyalty  
 The fibre of my soul;  
 Why lament ? Oh, pilgrim  
 Even in the far off shore  
 On the banks of Sipra;  
 A will for her  
 Still resides in my soul;  
 A love for her  
 Still throbs in my veins;  
 A fondness for her  
 Still lingers in my soul;  
 Who says that I was born ?  
 Who says that I die ?  
 I flow ! I flow for ever  
 I flow full in the stream of life  
 I flow in the fathomless ocean of existence  
 I flow in the mote of the sunbeam  
 I flow on the air currents of the Thar  
 I am the Unseen Spirit  
 The beginning and the end  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.



Oh, pilgrim ! Make haste ! Make haste !  
 Not in seductive thoughts and tempting things  
 Oh, pilgrim ! They savor and savor !  
 And go merry in mending quest  
 Eschew the impugnant impulses  
 Shun the worldly desires  
 Come with a resolve ! Come in poised mien !  
 To reach the divine destination  
 That beckons from the unknown deep  
 From the unspeakable night  
 Is million busy voices  
 On the banks of Sagar  
 Where all race of vehicles stink  
 And seamless shrouds are in shreds  
 In the immense miscegen of Durga  
 In the sunny wastes of Bharvar.

Oh, pilgrim ! Return home ! Return home !  
 Out of the radius fragility and amissive suspicion  
 Shed wide and indolence and sunny thoughts  
 Throw off the dust glass and steamy sham  
 Scatter for ever muzzling muzzling and Tamaramalising  
 Aflame only in the flames of God-head  
 Which thunder over mountains and forests  
 Pour over humbles and huts  
 Which fill and shall the world  
 With ringing vibrations :  
 Freedom ! Liberty ! Equality !  
 In the sunny wastes of Bharvar.

Oh, pilgrim ! Return home ! Return home !  
 Go back and carry a message for her  
 That I am in a perfect self  
 Self is a changeless thread, one in all  
 Self is pure without a stain  
 Self is the light of light

Self is the tranquil pool, where the soulful lotus sleeps  
Self is a silken bliss  
Self-realization is bliss-crystallised  
Where failure, success, gain or loss is for ever dispelled;  
Oh, pilgrim ! Rise up ! Rise up !  
Toil ! Toil ! Toil !  
With full faith in Him;  
Who alone turns thorns and briars into fruits and flowers  
Who alone transforms pain into ecstasy  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh, pilgrim ! Return home ! Return home !  
And convey my last message to her  
That whenever her honour is defiled  
Or her freedom rocked;  
I shall re-appear from the void  
With fervent faith;  
For I am the only rock of ages  
The unbreakable rock of the universe  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to thee, the worthy spirit  
Hail to thy credible deeds !  
Hail to thee, the trusted son of the Thar  
Hail to thy honourable integrity !  
Where the oceans of loyalty surge  
And the rivers of character roll;  
Where the flowers of endurance smile  
And the zephyrs of freedom blow;  
Where lofty mountains reach the sky  
And streams of virtue run unimpeded;  
Where the comets of sacrifice fly  
And meteors of pain die;  
Where 'mine' and 'thine' mingle in the Infinite  
And name, fame and favours eclipse;  
Where body, material and desires for ever wane

And mother's dignity like a lustrous ruby shine  
Hail ! Hail ! Hail !  
Hail to the upright Durga !  
Where finite and Infinite merge  
In the overflowing streams of joy  
In the unbounded happiness of the spirit  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Age can't tarnish nor discolour  
Nor blemish  
The beauty of Durga's soul;  
That bestirs and charms the world  
To face the dreary bleak  
To break the weary night's boredom  
And to silence the cacophony of flippant tongues  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*The Deathless Durga*

Hail ! the divine Durga  
The quintessence of godly grace;  
Thou alone turned hardships into sacrifice  
And taught the gore-spattered to sing;  
In thy life's journey  
Over the throes of thralldom, full of blazing pangs of pain  
Over thorny paths and inhospitable tracts  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! to virtuous Durga  
The sublime summit of salvation;  
Where all sectarian lanes devised by the crafty men  
Transcend the narrow loyalties and profaneness  
And merge and mingle into one  
In unison with the summit  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! the magnificent Durga  
The divine reservoir of perfection;  
Where pearls of wisdom and morals lie scattered  
Glittering and sparkling in unfaded glory  
Of spotless loyalty and enlightened fidelity  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Victory to Durga ! Victory to soul !  
The brave heart of endurance;  
Victory to pain, to suffering, to agony  
Victory to truth, to will, to bravery;  
To lofty, sublime and high ideals  
To adornable virtues that dwelled in Durga's heart  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Come and rejoice  
 For Durga is awake;  
 He is ever alive and immortal  
 In the shoreless sea of life and death;  
 Where origin is the end  
 And end is the origin;  
 Why wail ? Oh, pilgrim of the dark  
 Why succumb and give way ?  
 Life's pain and pathos  
 Can still be experienced in the bower of Durga;  
 Where faith never wanes  
 Or, diminishes like moon or sun in eclipse;  
 Plunge into the world without fear  
 With the reverence for Durga in your heart;  
 Where delightful melody  
 Of heavenly bliss for ever charm;  
 Throbbing and pulsating in enchantment pure  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! the immortal Durga  
 The eternal healer of the souls;  
 Lift me from the stygian darkness  
 Of the hellish fumes of human lust;  
 Rouse me into the rapture of new life  
 Tingle a hope fresh by thy touch;  
 Show me the path of everlasting delight  
 Of the mellifluous awakening of the soul;  
 Where all darkness dazzles into light  
 And devilish shadows for ever pale;  
 Where I dance in bewilderment of mirth  
 In the sunshine of eternal youth  
 In the fragrance of thy kindness  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail to Durga !  
 Where a divine halo reside ?

Dancing in selfless sacrifice and agile deeds;  
 Let thy gifts of gratitude  
 Awaken my timorous heart;  
 Let the canker of deceit for ever dry  
 In the nest of my brain;  
 Let the dusty filth over my face  
 Be cleansed by thy light;  
 Burn thy glowing lamp in my chamber  
 Open the inner door of thy shrine;  
 Where by thy enduring light  
 The mantle of my darkness shall ever be gone;  
 Pour thy mellow music  
 In the listless strings of my life;  
 Where I plunge into the supple dawn  
 I ply my boat across the turbulent waters  
 Where I sing with the bubbling brooks of perennial beauty  
 And mingle my life with thy life  
 In the hoary-headed peaks of truth  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! to Durga  
 Hail to the heavenly heights of glory !  
 Who alone could see God face to face  
 For faith is God and God is faith;  
 The charismatic god of the multitude  
 Is a sheer illusion  
 He is a cunning contrivance  
 Manipulated by the power elite  
 To prolong their blind desires of existence;  
 The god worshipped in hymns and rites  
 In a paraphernalia of customs  
 Is a crooked effrontery  
 To console the hungry mob  
 A false semblance of the highest truth;  
 God always resides solitary and aloof  
 Away from the wilderness of doctrines

The creeds of force  
The dogmas of self-centred ambitions;  
The gropings and search for God  
Is a vain hope, full of elusive charms;  
Drunk with delusions, men even leap like  
moths in the flames  
To search the Almighty God;  
None has the authority to interpret His will  
None is competent to unfold the petals of truth  
Except the individual alone  
Where in his conscience, the God is wide awake;  
Conscience is the soul of God and truth the will  
He who can devote himself in that direction  
Is a Durga divine  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! to Durga  
The sacred soul of renunciation  
Ever resplendent in a garland of pure white jasmines  
Overflowing with the richness of devotion;  
Where the fetters of worldly desires count no more  
And fabulous gold is worth nothing;  
Hail ! the noble son of the Thar  
For in sorrow and pain  
In defeat and death  
Never did thy will betray;  
Awaken ! Awaken ! for Durga beckons  
With his infinite grace  
And unbounded joy  
Towards a life replete with happiness  
Where I forget the world as its cares;  
Oh ! brave helmsman of the worldly ocean  
Row gently, skirting hazards  
But move and stop not  
And take thy boat  
Towards the happy harbour of Durga's abode

## THE DEATHLESS DURGA

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to superhuman Durga !  
The deathless name in the sands of the Thar;  
The refulgent star, never dimmed  
By the dark and dreary evils of the day;  
The milky path, luminous and gleeful  
Bright in the glory of glorious deeds;  
Oh ! the monstrous man ! the wicked savage !  
Of 'self' and 'I'  
Why cower in overwhelming fear, in the sheath of sorrow ?  
Abandon the greed and desire of jewel and gold  
Discard the shallow short cuts and expedient ways  
The worn and ragged ideas  
Disguised shabbily as new  
Beguiling the unwary  
With outer gloss and grandeur;  
Awaken the barren founts of soul  
Illuminate the deepest recesses of the psyche;  
And sail towards that unnamed shore  
Towards the heaven of Infinite bliss  
Where Durga in blazing radiance beckons  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Hail ! the immaculate Durga  
Famed for all time;  
Where boundless honour  
Of faultless and lofty character  
Ceaselessly flow;  
Inspire, Oh Durga ! Inspire !  
Hold my hands-  
Raise me from the dust;  
I gasp ! I stifle ! I choke !  
In the dismal, deadly and dull world  
In the disgrace of pelf and power  
In the suffocating quest for pride and glory;



Where the brute in me howls unhampered  
 Where the buds of thought wither before blossoming  
 And glory like fading petals fall;  
 Where the proud stumble in the unpenetrable dark  
 And block the pathway of the struggling youth;  
 Take, Oh take, me away  
 From the path of ruin and hell;  
 Towards the eternal zone of soft and sweet fragrance  
 The awesome ocean of spiritual delight  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Glory to Durga !  
 The light of the lights  
 Whose soul rejoice in a fragrant paradise of eternal bliss;  
 Blessed be ! Durga the great  
 Who lifted his soul to the ethereal heights of the divine;  
 Oh ! pilgrim of the dark ! the slave of shameful desires  
 Cast aside thy degrading lust  
 Thy desires are like the poppy flowers  
 Pluck one and its bloom is shed;  
 Desires are like the snowfall on the river  
 A moment creamy-white, then lost for ever;  
 Desires are sin  
 The wages of sin is death;  
 Oh ! Awaken ! pilgrim of the dark  
 Trod the path which Durga led  
 Where Truth is self, and self is Truth;  
 A universe of everlasting joy  
 Nestling in the cozy bower of fragrance  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Lo ! my day of judgment dawns  
 Its angry brows preclude all light from my heart  
 Its roaring thunder unleashed from His armoury  
 Awaken the sleeping snake from its pit  
 And pierce my heart like a knife;

## THE DEATHLESS DURGA

The ghostly drums sound, and gates wide open  
I sever my luxuriant bonds  
And consign the much-coveted gold to fire  
The crown of desires vanish in the dust  
The throne of vanity in ashes lie;  
Why any hesitation now ?  
I prostrate myself on His sharpest arrow  
And fasten my padlock on Durga's bower  
For I know of only path  
His unpolluted path of truth and faith;  
Where one floats over muddy impurities  
Like the legendary lotus flower  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Oh ! pilgrim of the dark  
Life is like a star  
It must break and drop;  
Once extinguished  
It is gone for ever;  
Life is frail like a flower  
It is sham, showy and tinsel;  
Why fear parting ?  
Let the temptation and fear eclipse  
Let the body and the desires perish;  
Rise up and conquer death  
He who conquers death  
Is a soul divine;  
He who utters 'Durga'  
At the last flicker of his worn-out candle  
Feels the eternal light, hang loose  
In the sweet paradise of Maroo  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Blessed be God ! Who created death !  
Cloathed in the holy robes of salvation  
The noble Durga went;

Ah ! pilgrim of the dark  
 Why hang like bats in a world of inverted values ?  
 When thou hold loads of jewels  
 Happily in silent grandeur  
 Sparkle the virtues that reside in thee  
 A spark in a soul  
 Is far better than thousand sparks of an atom;  
 Think of one ! the only one path  
 Where the milestones carry sublime animations :  
 I am the object, I am the subject  
 I am the lovely rose, I am the thorny prickle  
 I am the bliss, I am the curse  
 I am the jungle bloom, I am the stinging spike  
 I am the blush of the morning, I am the dim of the dusk  
 I am the angel, I am the ghost  
 I am the Durga, I am the Aurang;  
 I am the ascent and the fall  
 The chain of existence  
 Of life and decay  
 The beginning and the end of all  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

*Repose ! In Durga's Bower*

Awake ! Arise ! pilgrim of the dark  
The slave of sensual sin  
For the goblin at thy portals growl;  
Let thy slumbers break  
Let thy thought be exalted and clate  
Before Time swings wide its outward gate;  
Let thy cheerless solitude for ever fade  
Let thy mind run the onward race  
And reach the golden destination  
The peak of Durga's heights;  
Where the virtues rule thy heart  
Where thy soul in merriment dance  
And pleasures bloom  
Eternally !  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Awake ! Arise ! pilgrim of the dark  
Towards the glorious heights of Durga  
The heights, where all freedom-fighters  
Their homage pay;  
Move fast ! Move in ceaseless leaps !  
Through the hot sweat of toil  
Through endurance, courage and fidelity;  
Where thy grief and pain for ever end  
Where thy flute may strike notes gay  
Where thy life be a pilgrimage and a dance of unending joy  
And thy bondages may crumble fast;  
Let that be thy happiest hour  
When thy soul attains its destination  
In Durga's bower  
Eternally !

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Awake ! Arise ! pilgrim of the dark  
Open wide thy eyes  
Awake to see  
The rising snake-haired avenging deity  
Frowning in wry face  
That comes menacingly stealing on;  
Hurry up ! pilgrim of the dark  
Stretch yourself to the full  
Elate thy weary heart;  
Take repose in the shield and shade of Durga  
The proudest hero of chivalry  
The glorious knight of the sword;  
Who sailed through the venturous paths  
Towards a life of honour and glory;  
Where zeal and bravery are aplenty  
Where thy fetters for ever break  
Where thy soul, unhampered floats  
In yonder ocean divine  
Eternally !  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Awake ! Arise ! pilgrim of the dark  
Awake to see  
The gathering mist, cloudy with sin  
Falling out in dust upon thy mind;  
Where thy visions shake  
In shackles of slavery;  
Awake ! pilgrim of the dark  
Why grope about and fumble ?  
Recite the name of Durga ! Invoke the blessings divine !  
Ennoble thyself ! Elevate thee !  
Cheered onward in hope and trust  
Put on a fresh armour for thy fray  
And sail towards the bottomless abode of Durga

Eternally !

In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Awake ! Arise ! pilgrim of the dark  
 The wretched robot of technology;  
 Thou art like a shipwrecked mariner  
 Who in cries of endless groan  
 Struggles to climb up the boat;  
 With his arms and limbs bruised  
 And tumbles into the heaving sea  
 Amid the roar of the thunders;  
 Yet why lose thy heart !  
 Thou shalt not perish in the shattering blast  
 Thou shalt not be torn out, and scatter to the winds;  
 Have faith in Durga's endurance ?  
 Who could bear unmoved  
 Blasts of adversity and buffetings of destiny;  
 Have trust in Durga's light ?  
 The unfading light that beckons  
 Over stormy waters, over thundering clouds  
 Over vast expanses of the thirsty sands  
 And in solemnity, echoes in the firmament :  
 "I come for thee ! Fly with me !  
 Over the beams of my celestial ladder;  
 Where in songs immortal and sweet melodies  
 Thy shadowy phantoms for ever dim";  
 Amen ! Amen ! Amen !  
 Let that be thy happiest hour  
 Where thy soul swims in a blissful state;  
 In the blessed bower of Durga  
 Radiant, boundless and deathless  
 Eternally !  
 In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Farewell ! Farewell ! Farewell !

To the age that has grown corrupt and sick;

Farewell ! to the villainous man  
To the filth and rubbish of the world;  
Farewell ! to the serpent with a ruby in its mouth  
To the jewels that glare like an evil eye;  
Farewell ! to the snake that tempted Eve to sin  
To the string of pearls that blur thy honour;  
Farewell ! to the slothful slumbers  
Where thy life bends into wavy ridges;  
Hark ! Hark ! pilgrim of the dark  
Let thy weary soul of existence  
Regale itself in the cozy bower of Durga;  
The shelter of angelic excellence  
Where the outbursts of glory in exultant gleam  
In unmolested purity  
Like the spotless lily;  
Where the music of Durga's harp, in blitheness  
Softens thy impaired heart;  
Where thy streaks of fear crumble so fast  
That thy battle is over  
The citadel is stormed, thy victory won;  
Let that be thy happiest hour  
Where thy thought and action, in chaste  
Wave like ripples on a limpid streamlet  
In the ambrosial bower of Durga  
Brimful in changeless grace  
Eternally !  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.

Let that be thy happiest hour  
Where the forests in their myriad tongues  
In chorus proclaim of freedom;  
Where wild birds fill the echoing air  
With inebriating songs of liberty;  
Where the heaven is bright and cheerful  
And the nature glad and joyous;  
Where thy rotting weeds

That throttle thy life's swell tide  
For ever ebb;  
Let that be thy happiest hour  
Where the blasts of desert cry aloud  
With a shout wild and free  
That freedom with honour  
Smile in tempestuous glee  
In the bower of Durga  
Lofty, sublime and blest  
Eternally !  
In the sandy wastes of Marwar.





# Notes

This epic was composed in Jodhpur during the period February, 1986 to April, 1987.

## I

Durgadas Rathore, the greatest hero ever brought forth in Maroo or Marwar (Jodhpur), was the embodiment of godlike virtues. He was the radiant example of Maroo's greatness and glory. His deeds of sacrifice and toil for freedom, in the face of ceaseless hardships and suffering shall ever continue to inspire the generations yet to be born.

## 2

Maroo lies in the heart of the Thar in western Rajasthan (India). Maroo, Marudhar or Maroosthali are Sanskrit variations for Jodhpur. They mean the land without water. Here, the summer is hot, the rainfall is scanty and the famines are a recurring phenomenon. Despite centuries of ravages and calamities, the glamour of Maroo has never dimmed. Her plenteous womb pulsates in deeds of bravery and sacrifice, performed by her heroes and heroines.

## 3

In Maroo's venerable mirror of the past, the history pulsates in the spirited deeds of the brave. In her Hall of heroes, Durgadas stands on a high pedestal. His name sparkles in endless lustre and unfailing vigour. He is ever immortal and eternal. He could justly be styled as the 'saviour' of Maroo.

## 4

Durgadas was born in A.D. 1638, in the village of Salwa, 25 kms. north-east of Jodhpur. He was the third son of Askaran, a close confidant of Maharaja Jaswant Singh I, the Ruler of Jodhpur. One day an incident happened. Durga slew a herdsman who was looking after state camels. As such, he was summoned to the Court of Jaswant Singh. Durga made a bold defence, narrated the reasons and confessed the guilt. Jaswant Singh was greatly impressed by the uprightness and integrity of Durgadas. On that day Jaswant Singh made a prophecy that in the years ahead, when Maroo faced dismal days, this young lad (Durga) alone would be her saviour. And instead of punishment, Jaswant Singh gave a job to Durgadas in his army. Jaswant Singh was an ally of the Mughal Emperor Shahjahan. During the last days of Emperor Shahjahan, the war of succession started among his four sons. Dara, the eldest, was the fondest of Shahjahan. The other sons were Shuja, Murad and Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb marched ahead from the South to wrest the sceptre of Hindustan. Shahjahan despatched an army under the command of

Jaswant Singh (along with Dara) to face Aurangzeb. The two armies of Jaswant and Aurangzeb collided at Dharmat (18 April A.D. 1659). In the battle of Dharmat, Durgadas showed extraordinary valour. This was the first appearance of Durgadas. The battle was won by Aurangzeb. His victory at Dharmat was followed by another victory at the battle of Sarangarh (May 10, A.D. 1659). Thereafter Aurangzeb crowned himself Emperor of Hindustan (June 25, A.D. 1659). His reign lasted upto his death in A.D. 1707.

5

Maharaja Jaswant Singh I of Jodhpur (A.D. 1628-59) was a powerful Ruler. Jodhpur was the most important Hindu state in Northern India. Jaswant was an ally of the Mughal Emperor Shahjahan. He rendered remarkable services to the cause of the Mughal Empire. When Aurangzeb became the Emperor of Hindustan, he won over Jaswant to his side (through flatterments and diplomacy) and utilised his services in Kabul and Kandhar. Though Jaswant became an ally of Aurangzeb, still the latter had suspicions about him on account of Jaswant's support to Dara in Dharmat and his earlier role in the battle of Khajwa. Under Jaswant's reign, Maroo made an all-round progress.

6

Maharaja Jaswant Singh I breathed his last (A.D. 1659) at Jamrud. He had no issue. His two sons had earlier died in the battles. At the time of his death, his two Maharani's were pregnant. Whether a posthumous son would be born or not—this puzzle haunted Jaswant. Even if a posthumous son was born, Jaswant had a great suspicion that Aurangzeb was capable of going to any extent, even to that of snatching his progeny. At this critical juncture when Jaswant lay on his death-bed, Durgadas made a solemn promise that if a posthumous son was born, he would face the wrath of Aurangzeb and put the posthumous son on the throne of Jodhpur and safeguard the freedom of the Kingdom. Durga's promise provided a great solace to Jaswant and the life-bird flew from his body. Durga also prevented the widows of Jaswant from ascending the funeral pyre along with the dead body of their husband, so became sure in the interests of Maroo.

7

Maroo was grieving over Jaswant's death. Aurangzeb heard the news when encamped in Aimer. A swollen streak of joy rippled over the face of Aurangzeb. He dispatched his army to subdue Jodhpur. Maroo's worst days began and a dark cloud of horror spread over the sands of the Thar.

8

A few weeks after Jaswant's death, Aurangzeb came to know that the widows of Jaswant were delivered of posthumous sons. For a moment, Aurangzeb was alarmed. He then moved in disguise to kill the progeny of Jaswant through deceit and hypocrisy. He hurriedly rushed from Aimer to Delhi to execute his plans.

## 9

Aurangzeb had already issued the orders to bring the widows and infants of Jaswant to Delhi, where they would be taken care of by the Emperor of Hindustan. The coterie of the departed Jaswant, along with the widows and the infants, reached Delhi. Aurangzeb kept the infants in the castle of Nurgarh. The Mughal Court became a hub of diplomacy. Aurangzeb offered gold and silver to the chiefs and nobles of Jodhpur, who accompanied the widows and the infants. Aurangzeb pleaded that he himself would take care of the infants of deceased Jaswant, because the latter had rendered useful services to the cause of the Mughal Empire. At this critical time, Durgadas could sense the foul eye of the Emperor. He in disguise hatched a plan, and escaped from the castle of Nurgarh along with the infant princes. The bloody skirmishes took place, but Durgadas broke the barriers and fled towards Maroo. The infant Dalthambhan collapsed on the way. But Durga successfully carried infant Ajit, the last surviving legacy of Jaswant, to Maroo. In disguise, he handed over the infant Ajit to a Brahmin lady in the village of Kalindari. The Brahmin lady secretly took care of the infant Prince. And Durga started the battle for Maroo's freedom against the Mughal domination. This freedom struggle lasted for nearly three decades (A.D. 1678-1708).

## 10

Durga's escape and flight from the Mughal Court was a severe blow to Aurangzeb's prestige. As such, he intensified his efforts and despatched a huge army to humiliate Maroo and to teach Durga a lesson. Under the heels of Aurangzeb's army, Maroo's worst days began.

## 11

Durgadas accepted the challenge of Aurangzeb. He vowed never to bow before the might of Aurangzeb. He sounded the bugle for freedom and wars and skirmishes followed.

## 12

Durga was the lion of Maroo. For him agony was a constant mate. Through the sheer force of his will, Durga carried ahead Maroo's freedom struggle.

## 13

Durga's resources were thin and feeble. He, therefore, took recourse to diplomacy. He successfully enticed Prince Muhammed Akbar, the fourth son of Aurangzeb, and won him over to his side. At Nadole, a village in Jodhpur, Durga proclaimed Prince Akbar, Emperor of Hindustan.

## 14

The combined army of Durga and Prince Akbar marched towards Ajmer, where Aurangzeb was encamped. Through cunning diplomacy, Aurangzeb foiled their plans, and both Durga and Prince Akbar fled towards Jalore (in Jodhpur).

29

[illegible]

10

the Emperor and Prince of Wales, transmitted the young Emperor's personal letter to the Prince of Wales, the state dining table. The Emperor's letter was long and handsome bounty and the Prince of Wales's letter was a handsome bounty.

—

When they reached the top of the Deccan. By observing very carefully :  
firstly, the various points of contact : either in Jodhpur, and secondly, in  
the other place, but in the South Deccan, where he could be entangled  
with the British. The Government, under the leadership of Shambhaji  
the son of the late great ruler of the Deccan. He then handed over  
the charge of the Deccan to his able assistant, Shambhaji Saheb and instructed  
him to continue the struggle and maintain. Durg and other places  
which were under the Deccan.

13

1. Examine the following text and answer the questions that follow.

10

[illegible]

25

...the ... against the ...

Figure 10

While in the Deogarh Durg rendered remarkable services to the Marathas against their main rival Surampah. One day at the mid-night Durg was a premonition that a serious battle waged in Indipur, where Surampah's Sonar was killed. This premonition tormented him in the vile dream of the Deogarh.

—

"American Society worked along the freedom struggle in India. Its  
 English branch is the basis of Bundelkhand in November, 1940."  
 "There is no other branch in the country."

## NOTES

### 23

Champavat Sonag's death was a severe blow to the liberation forces of Maroo. However, immediately his elder brother, Champavat Ajab was proclaimed Commander and Maroo's freedom struggle continued. Champavat Ajab died on the battle-ground at Degrana (17 November, A.D. 1681).

### 24

The command of Maroo's liberation forces was then assumed by Champavat Udai. He achieved remarkable successes against the Mughals.

### 25

While Durga was in the Deccan, his close associate Kichi Mukandas, after a great reluctance, brought Prince Ajit out of his hiding. This was contrary to the instructions given by Durga to Kichi Mukandas.

### 26

The liberation forces, the chiefs and people of Maroo, heaved a sigh of relief at the appearance of Prince Ajit out of his hiding. This added to the wrath of the Mughals. The Mughal army relentlessly pursued Prince Ajit to capture him.

### 27

Durga had spent nearly six years in the Deccan. He, then, decided to return to Maroo. He bade farewell to his friend Prince Akbar, who sailed to Persia, to escape Aurangzeb's anger. Durga hurriedly moved towards Maroo in A.D. 1687.

### 28

Prince Muhammed Akbar sailed to Persia in A.D. 1687. Soaked with the pathos of separation, Durgadas bade farewell to him.

### 29

After bidding farewell to Prince Muhammed Akbar, Durgadas hurriedly moved back to Maroo. The enemy in furious wrath chased him. Facing all difficulties and troubles Durga returned to Maroo (via Mewar) to strike a last nail in the coffin of the Mughal Empire. The news of Prince Ajit's early appearance from the hiding was conveyed to him in Mewar. He was greatly worried over this news for Prince Ajit was still a teenager. From Mewar, Durga rushed to Maroo to organise the liberation forces.

### 30

The exact year of this incident is not known. It is highly probable that it might have occurred around A.D. 1690. Durga cut-off the head of Khan Shamsher, the Mughal *Subedar* of the fortress of Kantaliya. Thereafter he provided shelter to his daughter, Hamida, till she was married to a muslim of her choice.

31

Prince Muhammed Akbar's daughter and son—Princess Safiyat-un-nissa and Buland Akhtar—both were under the protection of Durgadas in Maroo. Durga's trusted man Joshi Girdhar Raghunath Sanchora looked after their welfare and education. Aurangzeb was keen to have his grandchildren back. As such he started negotiations with Durga. Durga first returned Princess Safiyat-un-nissa and then Buland Akhtar in A.D. 1696. Aurangzeb was delighted at Durga's gesture and accorded him a royal reception in the Mughal Court.

32

Emperor Aurangzeb died in A.D. 1707. The Deccan proved to be the graveyard of his reputation as well as of his body. While on his death-bed, Aurangzeb lamented over his past follies and mistakes.

33

After Aurangzeb's death, Durgadas intensified his efforts for the liberation of Maroo. Along with Prince Ajit, he laid siege to the fort of Jodhpur. The Mughal *naib-faujdar* of the fort of Jodhpur surrendered. The liberators captured the fort. It was a historic victory. Maroo at last became free. The *panch-ranga* fluttered over the fort. Prince Ajit was placed on the ancestral throne. Durga's life-long vow was thus fulfilled after a struggle of three decades.

34

Prince Ajit became the Ruler of Jodhpur. He offered the post of Chief Ministership to Durgadas. Durga politely declined and thus became the harbinger of saintly politics.

35

The ways of power are different. The feudal lords never liked the reputation and fame of Durgadas. They, therefore, started intrigues and began to poison the ears of Ajit. Ajit fell a victim to the intrigues and in a mad rage ordered the exile of Durga. The noble Durga obeyed the orders of exile and moved towards Ujjain, where he breathed his last on November 22, A.D. 1718 on the banks of the holy Sipra.

36

Durgadas was cremated on the banks of the holy Sipra, where a cenotaph was later erected. The cenotaph in majestic serenity conveys the message of Durga—the message of sacrifice and freedom.

37

Durgadas is immortal and deathless in the history of Maroo, nay, that of India. He was quintessence of god-like grace. In him, the grains of perfection never dimmed. His life's journey glorified that the soul too has altitudes.

38

It is a message to the timid and timorous robot of the technological age.

## *Glossary*

Sati	: A custom in medieval India among the ladies of warriors of ascending the funeral pyre along with dead body of her husband.
Sindoor	: Scarlet powder put by married ladies at the midmost of their forehead.
Pathan	: A valorous tribe of Afghanistan and North East Frontier Provinces.
Mahoob	: The name of Jaswant's horse.
Shesnag	: The King Cobra.
Panch-ranga	: The five-colour flag of the Rathores of the former state of Jodhpur.
Badshah	: Emperor
Sardars	: Chiefs or Nobles
Sadhu	: Hermit
Johur	: Self-immolation
Gadi	: Throne
Hindua-Suraj	: The sun of the Hindus
Sisodia	: The clan of Rajputs to which the Royal family of Mewar belonged.
Bati	: Cake
Ghee	: Butter
Havan	: A customary ceremony
Pujari	: Priest
Jaziya	: A tax imposed upon the Hindus by Aurangzeb.
Subedar	: Keeper
Mehfil	: Carousal
Nirvana	: Salvation
Padak	: Award
Mansab & jagirs	: Fiefs
Kharita	: A copper plate of Recognition
Naib-Faujdar	: Sub-Commander



## *Errata*

<i>Page</i>	<i>Line</i>	<i>Incorrect</i>	<i>Correct</i>
22	23	Monned	Moaned
63	33	Viens	Veins
100	30	Is	In
101	22	Had	Hand

